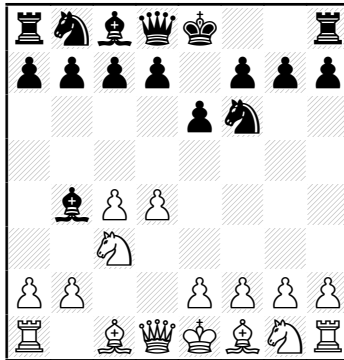


Nimzo–Indian [E20-59]

Written by GM John Emms

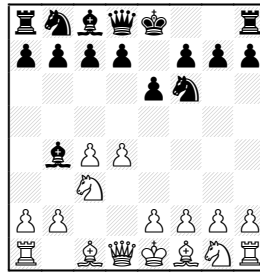


Welcome to the Nimzo–Indian, one of the most respected and popular defences to the Queen's Pawn Opening. Initially based on Aron Nimzowitch's concept of controlling the centre with pieces rather than pawns, the Nimzo–Indian (or Nimzo, for short) is now debated by all of the World's top players. Kasparov, Kramnik, Anand and Karpov have all had their successes with the Nimzo. This defence demands respect from everyone and it's withstood its sternest test, the one of time.

All the games given in [blue](#) can be accessed via ChessPub.exe, simply head for their respective ECO code.

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1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♗c3 ♖b4



4 e3

4 ♖c2

a) 4...0-0 5 a3 (5 e4 Nimzo-Indian: Classical-4...0-0 5 e4- [E32]) 5...♗xc3+ 6 ♖xc3 b6 (6...♗e4 Nimzo-Indian: Classical-4...0-0 5 a3 Bxc3+ 6 Qxc3- [E32]) 7 ♗g5 Nimzo-Indian: Classical-4 0-0 5 a3 Bxc3+ 6 Qxc3 b6- [E32]

b) 4...c5 5 dxc5 0-0 (5...♗a6 Nimzo-Indian: Classical-4...c5 [E38]) 6 a3 Nimzo-Indian: Classical-4...c5 5 dxc5 0-0- [E39]

c) 4...d5

c1) 5 cxd5 exd5 (5...♖xd5 Nimzo-Indian: Classical-4...d5 5 cxd5 Qxd5- [E34]) 6 ♗g5 Nimzo-Indian: Classical-4...d5 5 cxd5 exd5- [E35]

c2) 5 a3 5...♗xc3+ 6 ♖xc3 ♗e4 (6...dxc4 Nimzo-Indian: Classical-4...d5 5 a3- [E36]) 7 ♖c2 Nimzo-Indian: Classical-4...d5 5 a3 Bxc3+ 6 Qxc3 Ne4- [E36]

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4 a3 ♗xc3+ 5 bxc3

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b) 5...0-0 6 e3 c5 7 ♗d3 ♗c6 Nimzo-Indian: Saemisch-5...0-0 6 e3 c5 7 Bd3 Nc6- [E29]

4 ♗g5 h6 (4...c5 5 d5 Nimzo-Indian: Leningrad- [E30]) 5 ♗h4 c5 6 d5 Nimzo-Indian: Leningrad-4...h6 5 Bh4 c5 6 d5 d6- [E31]

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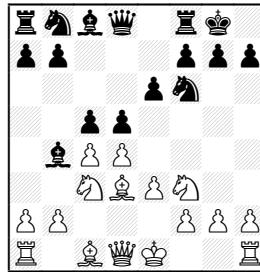
4...c5 5 Nge2 (5 Nd3 Nc6 6 Nf3 Nxc3 + 7 bxc3 Nimzo-Indian-Hübner Variation- [E41]) 5...cxd4 6 exd4 Nimzo-Indian -4 e3 c5 5 Nge2- [E42]

5 Nf3

5 Nd3 d5 (5...d6 Nimzo-Indian-4 e3 0-0 5 Bd3- [E47]) 6 a3 (6 Nge2 Nimzo-Indian-4 e3 0-0 5 Bd3 d5 6 Nge2- [E48]) 6... Nxc3 + 7 bxc3 Nimzo-Indian-4 e3 0-0 5 Bd3 d5 6 a3- [E49]

5 Nge2 Nimzo-Indian-4 e3 0-0 5 Nge2- [E46]

5...d5 6 Nd3 c5



6...b6 Nimzo-Indian-4 e3 0-0 5 Nf3 d5 6 Bd3 b6- [E52]

7 0-0

7 a3 Nimzo-Indian: 4 e3 0-0-5 Nf3 d5 6 Bd3 c5 7 a3- [E53]

7... Nc6

7...dxc4 8 Nxc4 cxd4 Nimzo-Indian: Main Line - 7 0-0 dxc4 8 Bxc4- [E54]

8... Nbd7 Nimzo-Indian: Main Line - 7...dxc4 8 Bxc4 Nbd7

8 a3 Nxc3

8...dxc4 Nimzo-Indian: Main Line - 8 a3 dxc4 9 Bxc4 cxd4- [E57]

8... Na5 Nimzo-Indian: Main Line - 8 a3 - [E56]

9 bxc3 Nimzo-Indian: Main Line - 8 a3 Bc3 9 bxc3 dxc4 10 Bxc4- [E59]

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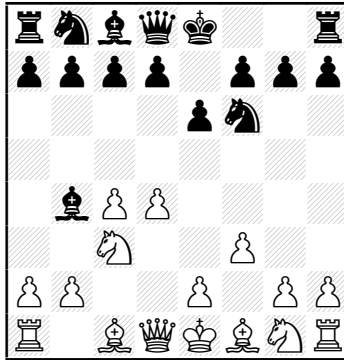
Nimzo-Indian – 4 f3 [E20]

Last updated: 26/06/03 by John Emms

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♗b4

The Nimzo-Indian Defence is one of the soundest openings available to Black.

4 f3



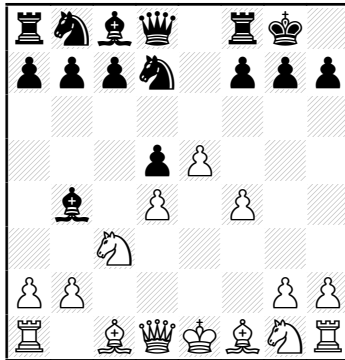
The enterprising 4 f3 is a move that confronts the Nimzo head-on. If Black does not react energetically White will simply play 5 e4! and win the opening battle. This line has been a particular favourite of the aggressive Latvian Grandmaster Alexei Shirov. For the pin-breaking 4 ♗d2 see [Schaufelberger-Jaracz/Biel 2000](#)

4...c5

4...d5 5 a3 (5 ♖a4+?! [Saeidi,R-Roghani,A/Fajr Open 2001](#).) 5...♗xc3+ 6 bxc3 c6!?! (6...c5 see ECO code [E25] 6...♘bd7 [Volkov,S-Romanishin,O/Batumi GEO 1999](#).) 7 ♖c2 7...0-0 (7...dxc4 8 e4 gives White very promising play in return for one sacrificed pawn.) 8 cxd5 (8 e4 dxe4 9 fxe4 e5! is fabulous for Black, and even more so after 10 dxe5? ♘g4 which leaves White's pawn structure in ruins.) 8...cxd5 9 e4 [Golod,V-Rozentalis,E/European Club Ch. 2000](#).

4...d5 is the main alternative.

4...0-0 What could be more natural than castling? 5 e4 The only logical response. 5...d5 Black needs to hit back at the centre before White gets developed and consolidates his space advantage. 6 e5 The only natural continuation for White. 6...♘fd7 7 cxd5 xd5 8 f4!?



Very ambitious – White is aiming for a large, powerful centre. See the game [Volkov,S–Vekshenkov,N/Togliatti 2003](#).

5 d5

A natural Benoni style continuation, although 5 a3 is more in the Saemisch mode.

5...exd5

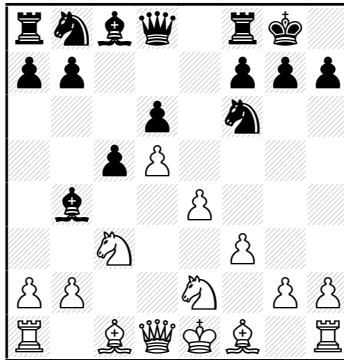
The more typical approach as seen on this site is for Black to keep things blocked up with ...d6 intending ...e5. Conceding the bishop for the knight then (particularly doubling pawns) fits in with the concept of closing the position. '!' 'Offering a gambit which, in practice, White rarely accepts.'

5...♗xc3+?! It seems to me that conceding this bishop without provocation simply leaves Black a tempo down on the old fashioned Saemisch variation (4 a3). 6 bxc3 d6 7 e4 [Golod,V–Martinovic,S/Bad Wiessee GER 2000](#).

5...b5!? Offering a gambit which, in practice, White rarely accepts. 6 e4 (6 dxe6 fxe6 7 cxb5 d5 gives Black a big centre as compensation for the pawn.)

a) The main line runs 6...bxc4 7 ♗xc4 ♘xd5 8 ♗xd5 (8 exd5? ♙h4+!) 8...exd5 9 ♙xd5 ♘c6
 b) 6...0-0!? [Volkov,S–Gershon,A/Halkidiki 2002](#).

6 cxd5 d6 7 e4 0-0 8 ♘ge2



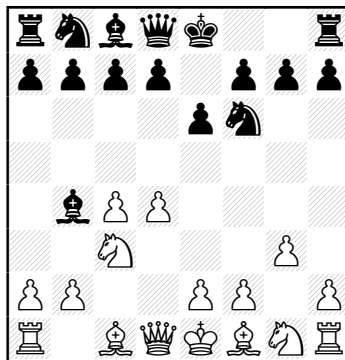
8...Nf5!?

A logical idea that we have seen successfully employed before. Black frees his queen to go to h4 and prepares for the centre–pressurising ...f5: [Sakaev,K–Vladimirov,E/Tomsk RUS 2001](#).

Nimzo-Indian – 4 g3 [E20]

Last updated: 14/01/02 by John Emms

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♙b4 4 g3



4...c5 5 ♘f3 cxd4 6 ♘xd4 0-0

Black has other moves, including 6...Ne4, but this is the main line.

7 ♙g2 d5 8 cxd5

8 ♖b3 ♙xc3+ 9 ♖xc3 Although this looks like the obvious recapture, in fact originally more popular was for White to keep Black's centre pawns at bay with 9 bxc3. 9...e5 10 ♘b3 [Ward,C–Hurn,R/Malta 2000](#).

8...♘xd5 9 ♖b3!?

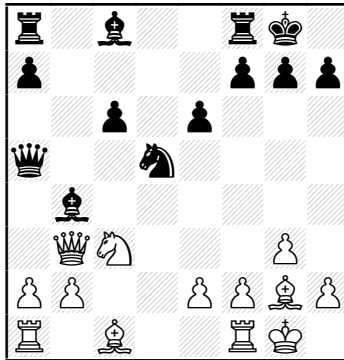
This move was first made popular by the young Russian Grandmaster Vadim Zviagintsev, who has had some success with it. The older move is 9 Bd2.

9...♘c6

9...Qb6 and 9...Qa5 are also possible.

9...♖b6 10 ♙xd5 exd5 11 ♙e3 ♘c6 12 ♘xc6 [Ward,C–Matthiesen,M/Copenhagen 1998](#).

10 ♘xc6 bxc6 11 0-0 ♖a5



12 ♖d2 ♗xc3 13 bxc3 ♖a6 14 ♜fd1!

This is a very clever move.

Black has no worries after 14 ♜fe1 ♜ab8 15 ♜c2 ♗c4

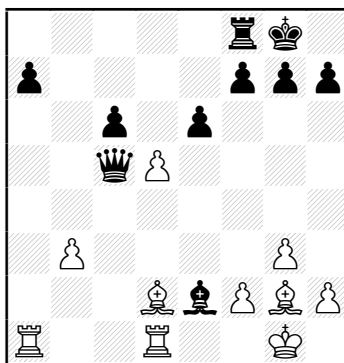
14...♜ab8

14...♜c5 15 e4 ♘b6 16 ♗c3 ♜h5 [Bacrot,E–Anand,V/Bastia FRA 2001](#)

15 c4

Now the tactics begin!

15...♜c5 16 cxd5 ♜xb3 17 axb3 ♗xe2



18 ♜e1!

This move was discovered in the post mortem to my game with Nielsen. The inferior

18 ♖dc1? ♗d6! is better for Black, for example, 19 ♖xc6 (19 ♗e3? cxd5! 20 ♗c5 ♗b8 21 ♗xf8 ♗xf8 and Black is winning, P.Nielsen–Emms, Copenhagen 1995) 19...♗d7 20 ♗f4 exd5 21 ♖d6 ♗b5 22 ♗xd5 a6 and Black went on to win in Alterman–Timman, Elista Olympiad 1998.

18...♗b5

18...cxd5? In my opinion this gives up without a real fight. Black has to hold his nose and jump into the complications of 19 ♖xe2 [Nielsen,P–Savon,V/Pardubice 1995](#).

19 dxc6

[Sauberli,G–Draba,H/IECC Swiss 2000](#).

Nimzo-Indian – 4 Nf3 [E21]

Last updated: 08/09/03 by John Emms

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 4 ♘f3 b6

4...♘c6 Essentially then we have a 4 Nf3 Nimzo with 4...Nc6 or kind of a 'two knights tango'. 5 ♗c2 d6 6 a3 ♗xc3+ 7 ♗xc3 [Ward,C-Quinn,M/Isle Of Man 2000](#).

4...♗xc3+!? [Matisons,H-Nimzowitsch,A/Karlsbad 1929](#).

4...0-0 5 ♗g5 This is the reason why 4... 0-0 is not as common as the other two moves – this pin can be quite annoying for Black. The only way to break it is to either play ...h7-h6 and ...g7-g5 weakening the kingside, or to waste a tempo with ...Be7. Black is often more reluctant to weaken his kingside once he has already committed his king there. 5...c5 6 e3 cxd4 7 exd4 h6 8 ♗h4 see [Jobava,B-Barsov,A/Abu Dhabi 2003](#)

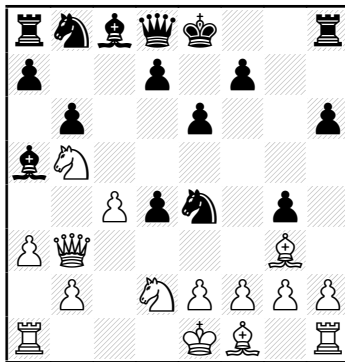
5 ♗b3

This line with 5 Qb3 is a particular favourite of the American Grandmaster Yasser Seirawan, who used it four times in his match with Michael Adams.

5...c5 6 ♗g5

6 a3 ♗a5 (6... ♗xc3+ 7 ♗xc3 0-0 transposes to a Qc2 Nimzo where Black has played an early ...c7-c5.) 7 ♗g5 h6 (7...0-0 8 e3 ♗b7 9 ♖d1 see [Szeberenyi,A-Lopez Martinez,J/Budapest 2002](#).)

For 7... ♗b7 see [Campos Moreno,J-Adams,M/Cala Galdana 2001](#) (ECO code E21).) 8 ♗h4 g5 9 ♗g3 g4! The idea of Black's previous play. Moving the knight simply leaves the d4-pawn hanging, so White is forced to sacrifice material. 10 ♘d2 cxd4 11 ♘b5 ♘e4



(11... ♖xd2+ 12 ♔xd2 ♗e4+ is also possible.) 12 ♗c7+ (For the alternative 12 0-0-0 see the game [Disconzi da Silva,R–Leitao,R/Sao Paulo 2001.](#)) 12... ♔f8
 a) 13 ♗xa8 ♕xd2+ (but not 13... ♗xd2 14 ♖d3 ♗b3+ 15 ♔d1 ♗xa1 16 ♖xd4 ♗h7 17 b4) 14 ♔d1 ♕b7 looks good for Black, for example: 15 ♗c7 ♖g5 16 ♗b5 ♕f4 17 f3 ♕xg3 18 fxe4 ♕e5 19 ♗xa7 ♕xe4 20 ♖xb6 ♔g7 and White cannot develop his kingside
 b) 13 ♖d1 13... ♗xd2 14 ♖xd2 (Of course not 14 ♖d3?? ♗/3#!) 14... ♕xd2+ 15 ♔xd2 ♕b7 see [Gretarsson–Adams/Reykjavik 2003](#)

6... ♕b7

6... ♗c6 7 d5 ♗a5 8 ♖c2 h6 9 ♕h4 ♕a6 (9... g5 10 ♕g3 ♗xc4 11 0-0-0 [Horvath,C–Weinzettl,E/Melk AUT 1999.](#)) 10 e4 g5 11 ♕g3: [Wells,P–Koneru,H/Millfield ENG 2000.](#)
 6...h6 7 ♕h4 g5 8 ♕g3 g4 9 ♗d2 cxd4 the bishop on b4 is en prise.

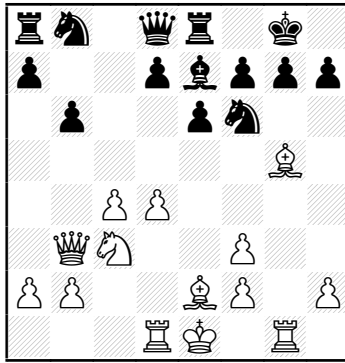
7 ♖d1

7 a3 ♕a5 8 dxc5 The 'justification' behind 6 a3 – the b6–pawn is pinned to the bishop on b7. However, this has all been seen before... 8... ♗a6! This pawn sacrifice looks very good for Black, who develops with a gain of time. 9 ♖c2 [Campos Moreno,J–Adams,M/Cala Galdana ESP 2001.](#)

7...0-0 8 e3 cxd4 9 exd4 ♕xf3

Given that this move is recommended in my book "Easy Guide to the Nimzo–Indian", I thought should give it a go. White is saddled with doubled and isolated pawns on the kingside, but can hope to exploit the open lines to whip up an attack against the Black king. I have to admit that I now believe more in White's chances than I did before this game.

10 gxf3 ♕e7 11 ♖g1 ♖e8 12 ♕e2

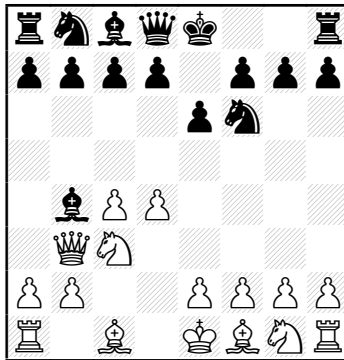


Sokolov,I–Emms,J/Hastings Premier 1998.

Nimzo-Indian – 4 Qb3 [E22]

Last updated: 14/01/02 by John Emms

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 4 ♚b3



This is much less usual than 4 Qc2, but has found occasional favour with players such as Piket and Malaniuk.

4...c5 5 d5 0-0 6 f3

White makes plans to support his big centre. Given time he could consolidate things and emerge with a comfortable space advantage. Alas for him things are not going to be that simple: [Bergsson,S-Olafsson,H/Reykjavik ISL 2000](#).

Nimzo-Indian: Saemisch – Introduction and rare lines [E24]

Last updated: 12/10/03 by John Emms

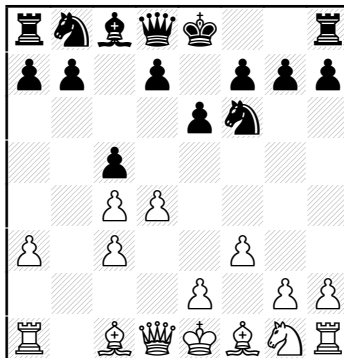
1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♗c3 ♙b4 4 a3

In some ways the Saemisch Variation (4 a3) could be regarded as the most critical response to the Nimzo. In effect White is calling Black's bluff. He is questioning Black's entire opening strategy. White says "You have pinned my knight with the intention of capturing it. I'm prepared to spend a whole tempo to force you to do what you want!". Russian Grandmaster Artur Yusupov remains one of its avid supporters.

4...♙xc3+ 5 bxc3 c5

5...b6 6 f3 Preparing a big centre with e2–e4. 6...♗c6 Black's play here is very logical. He immediately sets about attacking the c4–pawn, the main weakness in White's position. 7 e4 ♙a6 8 ♙d3 (8 e5 ♗g8 is the main alternative.) 8...♗a5 [Rudelis,G–Donaldson,J/Las Vegas 2002](#).

6 f3



6...d5

6...d6 7 e4 ♖c6 8 ♙e3 b6 9 ♙d3 ♗a5 Black begins his attack against the weak point in White's position – the c4–pawn. 10 f4 Creating an impressive pawn centre. (Or 10 ♗h3 ♙a6 11 ♚e2 ♚d7 12 e5 dxe5 13 dxe5 ♗g8 14 0-0 ♗e7 15 ♚ad1 ♚c7 16 ♙g5 0-0-0 17 ♗f2 and White was a bit better in the game Spassky–Huebner, Bugojno 1982.) 10...♙a6 11 ♗f3 [Murali Krishnan,B–Prasad,D/Nagpur IND 2002](#).

6...♗c6 7 e3?! It just doesn't make any sense here not to play 7 e4 as after all that is what this Saemisch system is all about. 7...b6 A typical plan. Black is not after fianchettoing his bishop but rather playing it out to a6 where combined with ...Na5 he can pressurise the weakest of the doubled c–pawns. 8 ♙d3 0-0 9 ♗e2 ♙a6 [Saric,I–Nikolac,J/Pula CRO 2001](#).

7 e3

White's normal move here is 7 cxd5 – see E25.

7...0-0 8 cxd5 ♗xd5 9 ♙d2 ♗c6

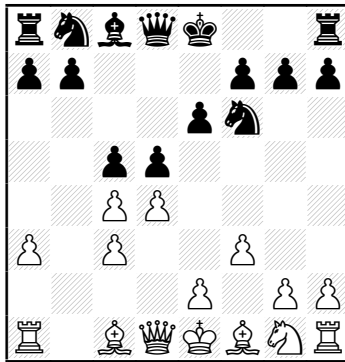
– see [Martic,Z–Zaja,I/Rabac 2003](#).

Nimzo-Indian: Saemisch – 5...c5 6 f3 d5

7 cxd5 [E25]

Last updated: 07/09/02 by John Emms

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♙b4 4 a3 ♙xc3+ 5 bxc3 c5 6 f3 d5



This position is more often reached via the move order 4 f3 d5 5 a3 Bxc3+ 6 bxc3 c5.

7 cxd5 ♘xd5

7...exd5 is rarely seen, but of course it's perfectly playable for Black, for example 8 e3 ♖c7! 9 ♖a2 cxd4 (9...♙f5 10 ♘e2 ♘c6 11 g4 ♙e6 12 ♘f4 gave White an edge in Georgadze-Lerner, Lvov (zt) 1990) 10 cxd4 ♙f5 11 g4 (11 ♘e2 ♘bd7 12 g4 ♙g6∞ when Black can hope for good counterplay down the c-file, Wells-Suba, London 1991) 11...♙g6 12 h4!? see [Erdogan,H-Selbes,T/Ankara 2002](#).

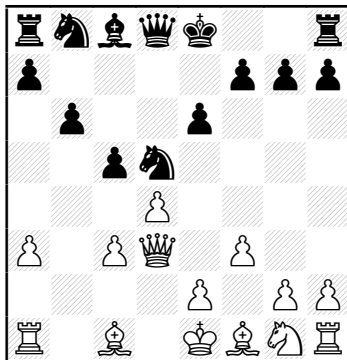
8 ♕d3

This queen move was popularised by the Latvian Grandmaster Alexei Shirov. Now that the c3-pawn and d4-pawn are adequately protected, White plans to kick away the Black knight with e2-e4.

8 dxc5 ♖a5 9 e4 ♘e7 Black can also retreat to f6 and c7, but grabbing the pawn with (9... ♘xc3 walks into a nasty pin with 10 ♕d2 After 10... ♘c6 11 ♙b2 ♘a4 12 ♕xa5 ♘xa5 13

♙xg7 White is clearly better.) 10 ♙e3 0-0 11 ♖b3 ♗c7 Milov,V–Gruenfeld,Y/Israel 1993.

8...b6



The recommended antidote to 8 Qd3. Shirov had big problems against this move, which eventually persuaded the Latvian to virtually give up on 8 Qd3. Black plans to annoy the White queen with ...Bc8–a6.

9 e4 ♙a6 10 ♖d2 ♙xf1 11 ♔xf1 ♘e7 12 ♘e2 ♘bc6

12...0-0 13 a4 ♘bc6 14 ♔f2 ♘a5 15 ♖a2 has previously been assessed as equal by Shirov. One wonders though whether he had 13 h4!? up his sleeve in the event of 12... 0-0 too.

13 h4!?

13 dxc5 13...♖c7!? Shirov–Karpov, Biel 1992.

13...h6 14 ♗h3

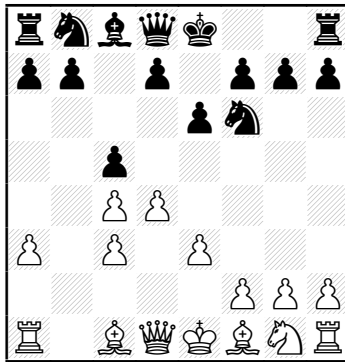
Shirov,A–canchess/Internet USCF 2000.

Nimzo-Indian: Saemisch – 5...c5 6 e3

[E26]

Last updated: 24/12/03 by John Emms

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♗c3 ♙b4 4 a3 ♙xc3+ 5 bxc3 c5 6 e3



With this move White plans development before erecting an imposing centre.

6...b6 7 ♙d3

Now White is ready to play e4 without having to play f3, so Black prevents this.

7...♙b7 8 f3

All very natural so far. Once again White is ready to erect a strong central pawn front. After 8 ♗f3 Black could consider either 8...Be4 and 8...Ne4.

8...♗c6 9 ♗e2

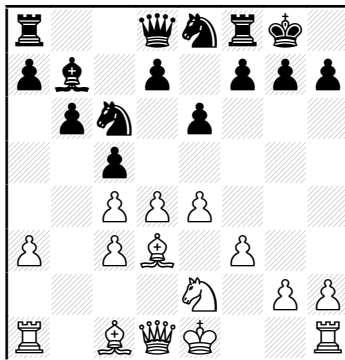
Now 9...0-0 transposes to ECO code E28.

Nimzo-Indian: Saemisch – 5...0-0 6 e3 c5

7 Bd3 b6 [E28]

Last updated: 24/12/03 by John Emms

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♙b4 4 a3 ♙xc3+ 5 bxc3 0-0 6 e3 c5 7 ♙d3 b6 8 ♘e2 ♙b7 9 f3 ♘c6 10 e4 ♘e8



Typical play from Black – the pin threat of Bg5 is prevented and the knight can be re-introduced via d6.

11 0-0

We have now reached a position very similar to the very main line of the Saemisch, but there are two subtle differences: White has played an extra f2–f3 and Black has played ...Bc8–b7. In White's case this is almost a loss of a tempo because very often White plays an early f2–f4 in the Saemisch. On the other hand, ...Bb7 is not ideal because Black usually goes straight to a6 with this bishop. Nevertheless, if anything I still think this difference slightly favours Black – he can often use the extra time to play a quick ...Rc8.

After 11 ♙e3 Black can play solidly with ...d6, but I prefer 11...♙a6!?, planning to meet 12 dxc5 with 12...♘e5!

11...♙c8!

Adding indirect pressure to the c4–pawn. I suspect that Black has nothing to fear after 11... Rc8 and the practical examples have so far supported my view.

Naturally 11... ♖a6 is also possible, when 12 f4 transposes to the main line of the Saemisch (with each player having made an extra move).

11... ♖a5 see [Geller,E–Euwe,M/Zurich 1953](#).

12 f4 f5 13 ♖g3 g6 14 dxc5 bxc5 15 ♕e3 ♖a5

was okay for Black in Eriksson–Nordstrom, Linkoping 1996.

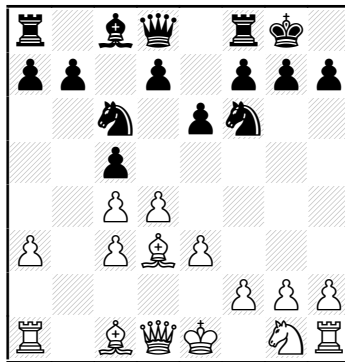
Nimzo-Indian: Saemisch – 5...0-0 6 e3 c5

7 Bd3 Nc6 [E29]

Last updated: 08/09/03 by John Emms

1 d4

1...♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♙b4 4 a3 ♙xc3+ 5 bxc3 0-0 6 e3 c5 7 ♙d3 ♘c6



The main line of the Saemisch Variation.

8 ♘e2 b6 9 e4 ♘e8!

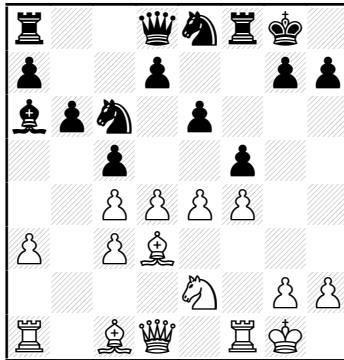
This move again, sidestepping the possible pin with Bg5 and preparing ...Nd6.

10 0-0

10 ♙e3 is an interesting sideline – see [Adams,N–Shapiro,D/Philadelphia 2002](#).

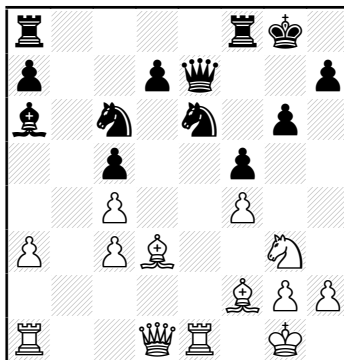
10 e5!? With e4–e5 White opens more lines of attack against the black kingside. It's a high-risk strategy because White's own king is still in the centre. 10...♙a6 see [Nimzo Saemisch/10 e5!?](#)

10...♙a6 11 f4 f5



12 ♖g3

12 exf5 White tries to open up the position as much as possible to suit his bishops. 12...exf5
 13 dxc5 bxc5 14 ♕e3 ♖e7 (14...d6 15 ♕f2 ♗d7 16 ♖g3 g6 [Aleksandrov,A–Balashov,Y/St Petersburg 2000.](#)) 15 ♕f2 ♖c7 16 ♖g3 g6 17 ♗e1 ♖e6



[Yusupov,A–Shapiro,D/Philadelphia USA 2002.](#)

12 d5!?! This is a relatively fresh idea. White offers a pawn and plans to close the position as well! At first this doesn't look like a good deal, but in fact it transpires that Black will be struggling for space. 12...♖a5 13 e5 [Milov,V–Polgar,J/Moscow RUS 2001.](#)

12...g6!?

Black bolsters the f5–pawn. Karpov did much to popularise this move in his two famous encounters with Saemisch expert Yusupov.

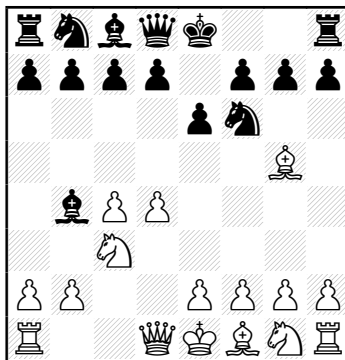
13 ♕e3

Keeping the tension in the centre.

Nimzo-Indian: Leningrad [E30]

Last updated: 13/05/03 by John Emms

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♙b4 4 ♙g5



The Leningrad Variation (4 Bg5) is not popular these days, but is due a return to fashion. Notable exponents of the Leningrad include Victor Korchnoi, Jan Timman and the Russian Grandmaster Evgeny Bareev.

4...c5

4...h6 5 ♙h4 c5 6 d5 b5 This 6...b5 gambit line that reminds me of the Blumenfeld Gambit: 7 dxe6 (7 e3 ♙b7 see [Leningrad Nimzo: 4...h6 5 Bh4 c5 6 d5 b5 7 e3](#)) 7...fxe6 8 cxb5 d5 9 e3 0-0 10 ♙d3 see [Ward,C-Hinks-Edwards,T/4NCL England 2000](#).

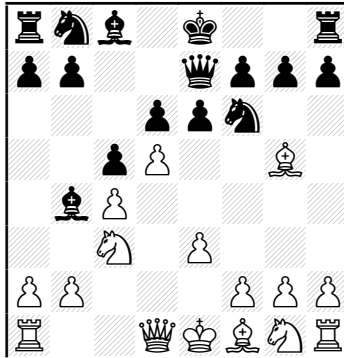
5 d5 d6 6 e3

6 f3 h6 (6...exd5 7 cxd5 0-0 8 e4 h6 see [Mohandesi,S-Barsov,A/Leuven 2002](#)) 7 ♙d2?! Although the consistent 7 Bh4, maintaining the pin is obviously the main move, it is easy to see why some club players may be attracted to this continuation. The logic may be that the bishop has fulfilled its role of helping to secure a big centre and it can now return evidently with a job well done, simultaneously preventing doubled pawns: [Parker,J-Lautier,J/Mondariz ESP 2000](#).

'Normal' for Black is now ...Bxc3+, followed by ...e6-e5 or ...Qd8-e7. This plan is often preceded by ...h7-h6, chasing the bishop away from g5. However, another very important idea is...

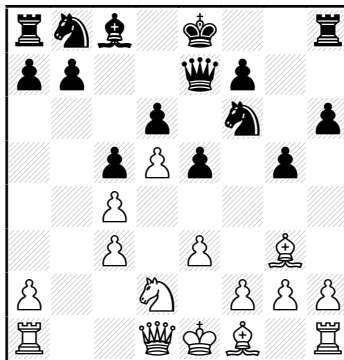
6...exd5

6...♔e7



7 ♖ge2 A remarkably uncommon old variation. It's logical to support the knight but I suppose the drawback is the temporary incarceration of the light-squared bishop:
[Cooper,J–Giddins,S/Birmingham ENG 2000.](#)

6...♙xc3+ 7 bxc3 ♚e7 8 ♘f3 e5 9 ♘d2 h6 10 ♙h4 g5 11 ♙g3



11...♙f5! An important move, taking control of the important long b1-h7 diagonal.
(11...♘bd7 would be answered with 12 ♙d3! and it's White who take control.) 12 h4
♚g8 13 hxg5 hxg5 [Bareev,E–Beliaevsky,A/USSR \(ch\) 1990.](#)

7 cxd5 ♘bd7 8 ♙d3

The critical move, offering a pawn sacrifice to swiftly complete development.

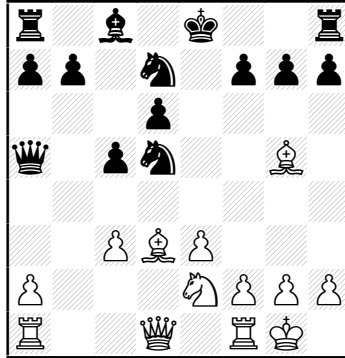
8...♚a5

Now Black has threats against both d5 and c3, so White must give up a pawn.

9 ♖ge2 ♘xd5 10 0-0!

Offering a second pawn.

10...♙xc3 11 bxc3



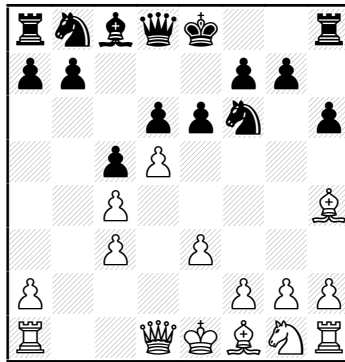
A crucial position has arisen. White has given up one pawn and another is on offer. In return, White is ahead in development, Black has yet to castle and White has the bishop pair in an open position. No real evaluation has been made of this position and there hasn't been too much practical experience at the highest level. My hunch is that most GMs would rather not play this position as Black. If White avoids the early silly tricks on his bishops then he has good chances to mount a serious initiative – see [Nimzo Leningrad: 4...c5 5 d5 d6 6 e3 exd5 7 cxd5 Nbd7/Summary 2001](#).
11 ♖xc3? ♖xc3 12 bxc3 c4! and Black wins a piece. This is a typical trick for Black.

Nimzo-Indian: Leningrad – 4...h6 5 Bh4

c5 6 d5 d6 [E31]

Last updated: 14/01/02 by John Emms

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♙b4 4 ♙g5 h6 5 ♙h4 c5 6 d5 d6 7 e3 ♙xc3+ 8 bxc3



The main line of the Leningrad.

8...♙e7 9 ♙d3 e5

9...♘bd7 10 ♘f3 (10 ♘e2 10...♘e5 11 0-0 ♘xd3 12 ♙xd3 Patino Romaris,J–Oms Pallise,J/Vila Real ESP 2001) 10...♘b6 11 0-0 Ward,C–Gligoric,S/Malta 2000.

10 ♘e2

10...♘bd7

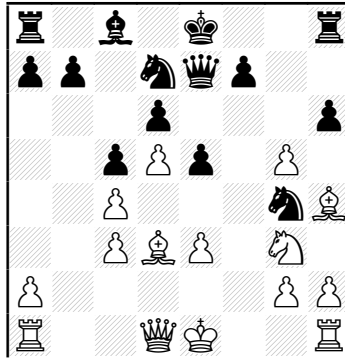
This whole line seems rather convincing for White and it would appear that if Black wishes to escape the pin then the immediate

10...g5 may be the solution. Indeed then 11 ♙g3 ♘bd7 12 f3 is considered to be equal by most text books whether Black continues with 12...Rg8 or 12...e4!?

11 f4!? g5

The recommended response which I might now venture to suggest needs reconsidering.

12 fxg5 ♖g4 13 ♖g3



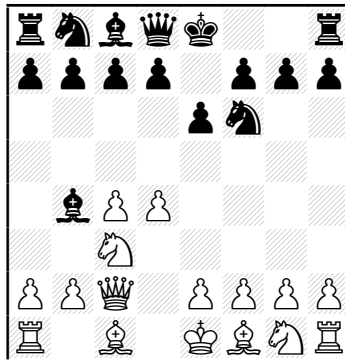
Misanovic, V–Hunt, H/Batumi GEO 1999.

Nimzo-Indian: Classical – 4...0-0 5 e4

[E32]

Last updated: 30/10/03 by John Emms

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♗c3 ♘b4 4 ♕c2



At this moment 4 Qc2 is probably the most popular answer to the Nimzo-Indian, and it's witnessed in some heavyweight Grandmaster battles between the likes of Kasparov, Anand and Kramnik. 4 Qc2 appeals to players who like the bishop pair and a healthy pawn structure. Initially popular earlier this century, when it was adopted by World Champions Capablanca and Alekhine, it drifted out of fashion when defensive resources were found for Black. It seemed that White was wasting too much time in the opening, just to avoid the dreaded doubled pawn complex. However, in the 1980s, the efforts of the American Grandmaster Yasser Seirawan, together with its adoption by Kasparov, meant that the Classical Variation was suddenly catapulted into the position as the main test of the Nimzo.

4...0-0

Black's most popular and reliable response to 4 Qc2.

4...b6?! 5 e4!: [Popovic,J–Stojanovic,M/Kragujevac YUG 2000](#).

5 e4

Up until the last couple of years this logical looking move has hardly been played. However, recently it's been used by Ivan Sokolov, Nigel Short, as well as Kramnik, so it must be treated with some regard. Ivan Sokolov even had the audacity to wheel out 5 e4 after condemning it quite openly in his book "Nimzo-Indian Defence Classical Variation", so he either revels in bad positions, or he's had a change of mind! My own view is that 5 e4 is a bit underrated, and we're likely to see a lot more of it in the future.

5...d5

5...c5 6 a3 (6 e5 cxd4 7 a3 ♖a5 This virtually forces White into a very unclear exchange sacrifice, after which Black's queen ends up in the corner and Black's king is quite exposed. 8 axb4 ♖xa1 9 exf6 dxc3 10 fxg7 ♜e8 11 bxc3 b5 – see [Xu Yuanyuan-Vijayalakshmi,S/Calicut 2003](#).) 6...♙xc3+ 7 bxc3 d6 8 dxc5? [Ward,C-Lezcano,J/Politiken Cup 2001](#).

5...d6 is the solid option: 6 a3 ♙xc3+ 7 bxc3 e5 8 ♙d3 c5 9 ♗e2 ♗c6 10 d5 ♗e7 [Ivanisevic,I-Nisipeanu,L/Istanbul 2003](#)

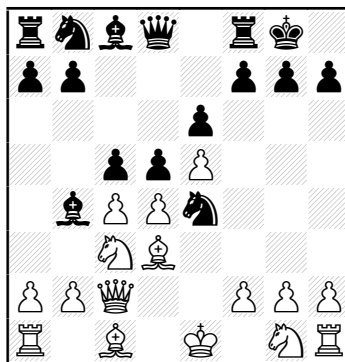
6 e5 ♗e4 7 ♙d3

7 a3 Asking the question of the Nimzo bishop, but falling even further behind in development. 7...♙xc3+ 8 bxc3 c5 9 ♙d3

a) 9...cxd4 10 cxd4 ♖a5+ 11 ♔f1 ♗c6 12 ♗e2 ♙d7 (12...♗b4 13 axb4 ♖xa1 [Shariyazdanov,A-Rashkovsky,N/Oberwart 2002](#)) 13 ♜b1 f6 14 cxd5 exd5 [El Gindy,E-Pavlovic,M/Linares 2003](#).

b) 9...♖a5 10 ♗e2 cxd4 11 cxd5 exd5 12 f3 ♗xc3 13 ♗xd4 ♗e4+ 14 ♔e2 ♖c3 15 ♙xe4 ♖xa1 with crazy complications – see [El Gindy,E-Simutowe,A/Abuja 2003](#).

7...c5



8 cxd5!

It's this simple move which has breathed life back into this variation for White. Earlier both 8 a3 and 8 dxc5 had been tried, neither with any particular success.

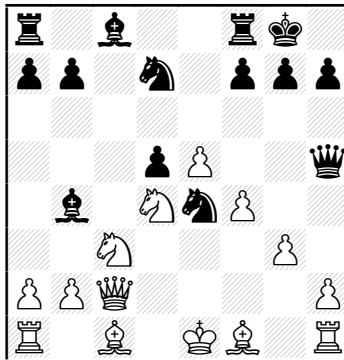
8...exd5 9 ♖ge2 cxd4 10 ♖xd4 ♖d7!? 11 f4 ♔h4+

Kramnik also suggests 11...Ndc5 and 11...Qa5 as possibilities for Black.
11...♖dc5 12 0-0 ♗xc3 13 bxc3 [Ward,C–Horvath,J/Malta 2000](#).

12 g3 ♗h3

12...♖xg3? 13 ♗f2! ♖c5 14 ♗c2 ♖ce4 15 ♗xe4 wins material for White.

13 ♗f1 ♗h5



[Kramnik,V–Adams,M/Cologne 1998](#).

Nimzo-Indian: Classical – 4...0-0 5 a3

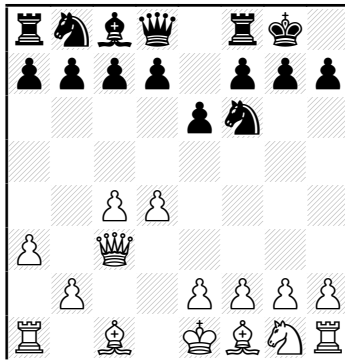
Bxc3+ 6 Qxc3 [E32]

Last updated: 29/07/03 by John Emms

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♖c3 ♙b4 4 ♚c2 0-0 5 a3

White's most popular move, immediately asking the question to the bishop on b4.

5...♙xc3+ 6 ♚xc3

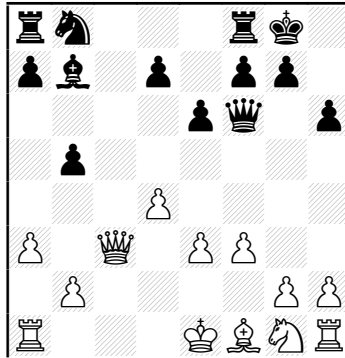


6...♗e4

6...d6 Signalling the solid approach. Having conceded his dark-squared bishop, Black logically aims to place his pawns on dark-squares to complement the one still left. 7 ♙g5 [Ivanchuk, V–Nikolic, P/Monaco 2000](#). (7 f3 see [Sasikiran, K–Korchnoi, V/Bled 2002](#).)

6...b5!? An interesting alternative to the tried and tested 6...b6. Black offers a pawn for a lead in development, although in practice, White often soon returns the favour. 7 cxb5 7...c6 8 ♙g5 (8 e3 8...cxb5 9 ♙xb5 ♗e4: [Van Wely, L–Nikolic, P/Wijk aan Zee NED 2000](#). 8 a4 This is a very double-edged way of hanging on to the extra pawn because White incurs obvious queenside weaknesses. See [Van Wely, L–Iordachescu, V/Istanbul 2003](#).) 8...cxb5 (8...h6?! [Hummel, P–Ward, C/Oakham ENG](#)

2000.) 9 e3 (9 e4? can be met by 9... ♖xe4!) 9... ♗b7 10 f3!? This is a new wrinkle from Kramnik. (10 ♖f3 for example) 10...h6 11 ♗xf6 ♖xf6



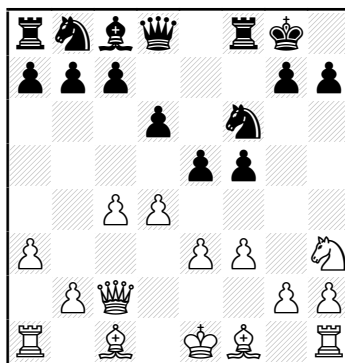
Kramnik, V–Adams, M/It, Dortmund 1998.

7 ♖c2 f5 8 ♖h3

8 e3 There is no doubt that the black knight on e4 is somewhat of an annoyance to White and that explains why he generally opts to hold back on Nf3. The pawn break f2–f3 is just the man for the budding job but White must beware ...Qh4+. 8...b6 Kishnev, S–Adams, M/Solingen GER 2001.

8 ♖f3 8...b6 Adianto, U–de Firmian, N/Biel 1995.

8...d6 9 f3 ♖f6 10 e3 e5



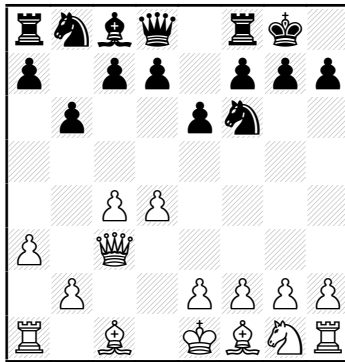
Black now has his fair share of the centre and can easily develop his pieces. As is so often the case in the Classical variation, White can point toward his bishop pair (minus structural weaknesses) to offer him a long term advantage: Ward, C–Adams, M/Redbus KO 2001.

Nimzo-Indian: Classical – 4...0-0 5 a3

Bxc3+ 6 Qxc3 b6 [E32]

Last updated: 12/08/03 by John Emms

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♗c3 ♘b4 4 ♕c2 0-0 5 a3 ♗xc3+ 6 ♕xc3 b6

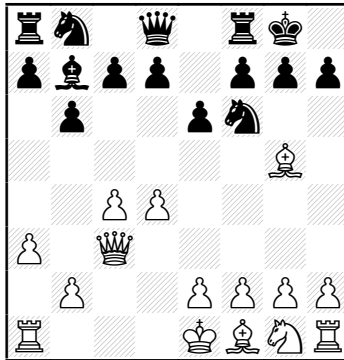


Black simply prepares to develop his bishop along the long diagonal.

7 ♗g5

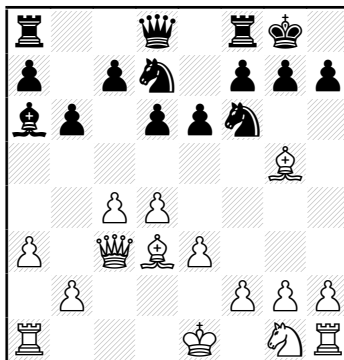
7 ♗f3 ♗b7 8 e3 d6 9 ♗d3 ♗bd7 10 0-0 ♗e4 gives Black good counterplay – see [Huss,A–Kosteniuk,A/Silvaplana 2003](#).

7...♗b7

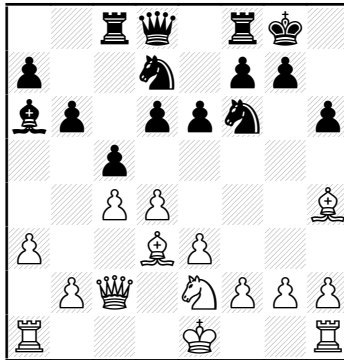


7...♔a6!? This ambitious move is the invention of the Lithuanian Grandmaster Rozentalis. Instead of occupying the long diagonal, Black immediately hits the c4-pawn, so often a target for Black in the Nimzo. This idea is relatively fresh, and the much of the theory in this line is still developing. 8 e3 (8 ♖f3 8...d6 9 e3 ♗bd7 10 ♔d3 c5 Schandorff,L–Rozentalis,E/Aarhus 1997. 8 ♗f3!?) A relatively new way of meeting 7...Ba6. White takes advantage of the fact that there is no black bishop on the long diagonal and attacks the rook on a8. The idea is to interfere with Black's smooth development on the queenside. 8...♗c6 9 e3 ♔b7 10 ♗f4 – see Beaulieu,E–Roussel Roozmon,T/Montreal 2003.

8 ♗f3 can be seen in Schandorff–Rozentalis, Aarhus 1997) 8...d6 9 ♔d3 Here we see White opting for a set-up involving Bd3 and Ne2. 9...♗bd7

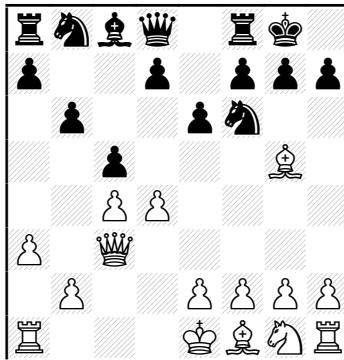


10 ♗c2 This move is relatively new, and it looks quite a clever idea to me. Black can get a lot of play against c4, so the idea of Qc2 is to go Qc2–a4 at the right moment, forcing the Black bishop to retreat to b7, thus relieving some of the pressure on c4. It's that simple. Of course White could also carry on developing as usual, for example (The older move 10 ♗e2 doesn't seem to cause Black too many problems: 10...h6 11 ♔h4 c5 12 b4 cxd4 13 exd4 ♖c8 14 ♗b3 e5 – see Herraiz Hidalgo,H–Zarnicki,P/Havana 2002.) 10...h6 11 ♔h4 c5 12 ♗e2 ♖c8



13 ♔a4 The queen arrives at a4 just in time. Now if the bishop retreats, White no longer needs to worry about c4. Instead of this Black prefers to defend it. 13...cxd4 (13...♗b7 Ivanov,S–Komarov,D/Vrnjacka Banja YUG 1999.) 14 exd4 14...♗b8 Atalik,S–Gustafsson,J/Bled SLO 1999.

7...c5



This is a perfectly playable alternative to the more popular options of 7...Bb7 and 7... Ba6. Black immediately strikes at the centre and postpones the decision about where to place the light-squared bishop. It may even remain on c8 for quite a while. 8 dxc5 It's not imperative for White to capture on c5, but this does seem to be the most popular move for White. Other sensible ideas include 8 e3 and 8 Nf3. 8...bxc5 9 f3 ♗c6 – see Golod,V–Kacheishvili,G/Las Vegas 2002.

8 f3

White places the e4-square under his control at the expense of making his kingside look a little funny.

8 e3 White chooses the set-up with e3, f3, Bd3 and Ne2

a) 8...d6 9 f3 ♗bd7 10 ♔d3 c5 11 ♗e2 ♖c8 12 ♔b3!? Richter,W–Emms,J/Bundesliga 1997. (12 0-0 is probably slightly inaccurate – see Tsai,C–Donaldson,J/Seattle USA 2002)

b) 8...h6 9 ♔h4 d6 10 f3 Blacking the long diagonal so that the bishop can be developed to it's post at d3. 10...♞bd7 11 ♔d3 c5! This is the way to play for Black here. Once again the c-pawn remains a target. Black will step up the pressure with such moves as ...Rc8 and ...Ba6, with perhaps ...d5 thrown in as well. 12 ♞e2 ♜c8 13 0-0 (13 ♜d2 ♔a6 14 ♜c1 cxd4 15 exd4 d5 Flear,G–Summermatter,D/Chiasso 1991) 13...♔a6 14 b4 (14 ♜b3 d5 Burmakin,V–Olafsson,H/Istanbul 2003) 14...cxd4 15 ♜xd4 Bareev,E–Leko,P/Dortmund 2002.

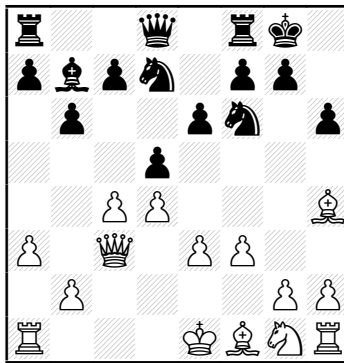
8...h6

8...d5 9 e3 ♞bd7 Privman,B–Hebert,J/Philadelphia USA 2001.

9 ♔h4 d5

Still the main line, Black prevents White from playing 10 e4.

10 e3 ♞bd7



10...♜e8 is slightly unusual. Black anticipates the sequence cxd5, ... exd5, when the rook will be effective on the e-file. 11 ♔d3 ♞bd7 12 ♞e2 c5 13 cxd5 cxd4 14 ♞xd4 ♞xd5 15 ♔xd8 ♞xc3 16 ♔h4 (16 ♔xb6?! is not good – see Kniest,O–Hracek,Z/Pardubice 2002.) 16...♞e5 see Gurevich,M–Kosten,A/Bordeaux 2003.

11 cxd5

When this move was first played it seemed that Black could reach a comfortable equality. However, the fact that players such as Kasparov and Kramnik are playing the white side of this line, means there's obviously been some discoveries made here for white players.

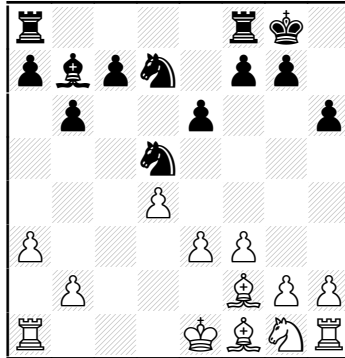
11 ♞h3 It looks a bit strange to develop this knight on h3, but it leaves the way clear for the f1-bishop to develop, and the knight can enter the game via f2 or f4. 11...c5 12 cxd5 Gurevich,M–Emms,J/Gent 1991.

11...♞xd5

12 ♕xd8 ♜xc3 13 ♕h4

13 ♕xc7 ♜d5 14 ♕d6 ♜xe3 is fine for Black.

13...♞d5 14 ♕f2



14...c5

The other possibility for Black here is 14...f5!?

15 e4

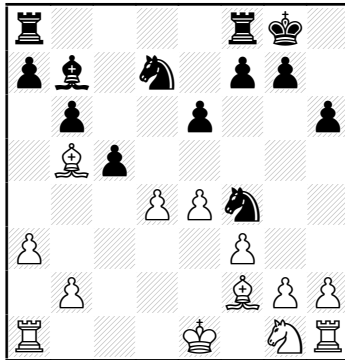
15 ♕b5 ♜5f6: Kramnik–Adams, Linares 1999.

15...♞f4

Certainly ambitious. Instead 15...Ne7 is a safe retreat.

15...♞e7 16 ♕b5 ♕c6!? [Topalov, V–Leko, P/Cannes FRA 2002](#).

16 ♕b5



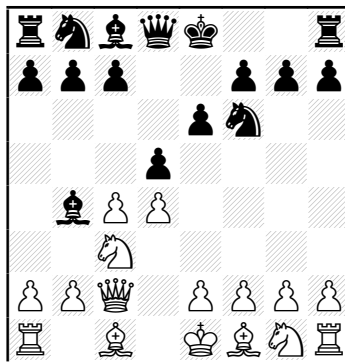
Sokolov,I–Hansen,C/Malmo SWE 2001.

Nimzo-Indian: Classical – 4...d5 5 cxd5

Qxd5 [E34]

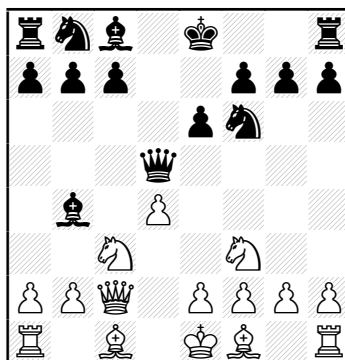
Last updated: 14/01/02 by John Emms

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♗c3 ♙b4 4 ♚c2 d5



4...d5 is a counter-attacking line in which Black tries to take immediate action against White's early queen move. This line can lead to extremely sharp positions.

5 cxd5 ♚xd5 6 ♘f3



6 e3 Preventing the queen swap that may come with 6 Nf3 Qf5 is probably a more ambitious way for White to play. 6...c5 7 ♔d2 ♕xc3 8 ♕xc3 Kind of reminiscent of a Queen's Gambit Chigorin Defence, Black gets to keep his queen centralised at the expense of the bishop pair. 8...cxd4 9 ♕xd4 ♖c6 10 ♕c3 0-0 11 ♗f3 Typically games in this system see White converting his bishop pair advantage in the endgame or Black doing enough to hold. 11...♞d8 (11...b6 Shipov,S–Short,N/Port Erin HUN 1999) 12 ♕e2 ♜e4 Ivanchuk,V–Gelfand,B/Monaco MNC 2001.

6...♜f5

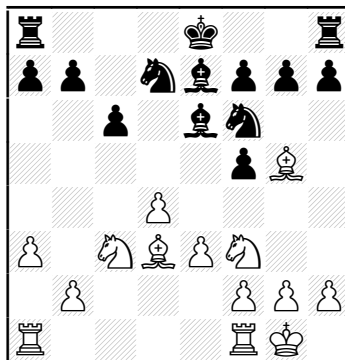
This idea of the Ukrainian Grandmaster Oleg Romanishin has really put 5... Qxd5 on the map. On first sight it looks a little strange to offer the exchange of queens at the cost of doubled pawns, but it appears that the pawn on f5 helps to keep a grip on the all important e4-square.

7 ♜xf5

This continuation hardly sets the pulses racing, but more and more White players may look to try and grind out some endgame advantage.

7 ♜d1!?! This move was the invention of Boris Gelfand. White simply aims to develop and show that the Black queen is badly placed on f5. Black must proceed actively to justify his early play. 7...c5 Sokolov,I–Kortschnoj,V/Dresden 1998.

7...exf5 8 a3 ♕e7 9 ♕g5 ♕e6 10 e3 c6 11 ♕d3 ♖bd7 12 0-0

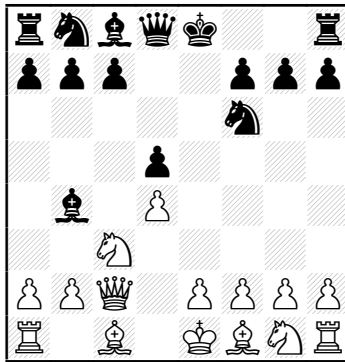


Kasparov,G–Kramnik,V/Linares ESP 1999.

Nimzo-Indian: Classical – 4...d5 5 cxd5 exd5 [E35]

Last updated: 12/10/03 by John Emms

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♗c3 ♘b4 4 ♙c2 d5 5 cxd5 exd5



This is more adventurous than the solid 5...Qxd5.

6 ♗g5 h6

6...c5 Played in favour of 6...h6, which may transpose to the text, but has the advantage of side-stepping the solid White option 7 Bxf6. That would lead to a typical Queen's Gambit Declined position and is certainly less interesting from a Black point of view.

a) 7 dxc5 7...h6 8 ♗h4 transposes to the main line. (8 ♗xf6 is also possible.)

b) 7 ♗f3 White tries to avoid complications. Off the beaten track: '7 dxc5 remains the most critical test of this variation.' 7...h6 8 ♗xf6 ♙xf6 9 a3 ♗a5 [Dao Thien Hai-Kasparov,G/Batumi GEO 2001](#).

c) 7 a3 7...♗xc3+ 8 ♙xc3 [Kiriakov,P-Ward,C/Isle Of Man 2000](#).

7 ♗h4

White could try for a small but safe advantage with 7 Bxf6.

7...c5!?

Reacting aggressively in the centre, Black is trying to show the down side of Qc2, in that the d4 pawn now lacks protection.

8 dxc5 g5

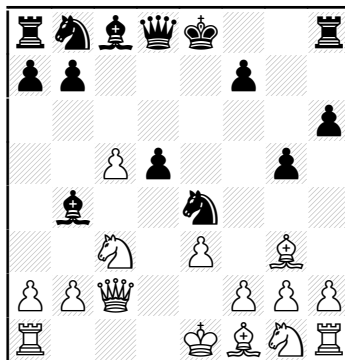
Currently this is Black's most adventurous try. It was brought into prominence by Nigel Short, who used it twice in his 1993 World Championship battle with Garry Kasparov. On the first occasion his novelty was a success. Kasparov thought long and hard in the opening, but could only succeed in finding a drawing line, one which Short had reached in his home preparation. However, when Short (perhaps somewhat optimistically) repeated the line later on in the match, Kasparov had done his homework, this time reaching a virtually winning position straight from the opening.

8...♖c6 is the older alternative: 9 e3 g5 10 ♘g3

a) 10...♚a5 11 ♘d3 (11 ♖ge2 ♘xc5 12 ♖c1 ♖b4 13 ♚d1 ♘f5 – see [Schenk,A–Huss,A/Pula 2003](#))
11...d4 12 exd4 ♖xd4 13 ♚d2 – see [Bozinovic,B–Gaspariants,G/Biel 2003](#)

b) 10...♗e4 11 ♗f3 ♚f6 (11...♚a5 12 ♖d2 ♖xc3 13 bxc3 ♘xc3 14 ♚b1 – see [Sherbakov,R–Lyrberg,P/Jyvaskyla 1994](#)) 12 ♘b5 ♖xc3 13 ♘xc6+ bxc6 – see [Kasparov,G–Spassky,B/Linares 1990](#)

9 ♘g3 ♗e4 10 e3



10...♚a5

This is the point. Instead of developing with 10...Nc6, Black puts immediate pressure on the c3-knight. Because of this White is not able to develop as smoothly as normal.

11 ♖ge2

11 ♖e5 This was how Kasparov reacted in his first game with Short. 11...0-0 12 ♖d3 ♗c6
13 ♖xc4 ♗xc5 14 ♖xd5 ♖g4 15 ♖xb7 ♜ad8 – see [Carlhammar,M–Kosten,A/Villeurbanne 2003](#)

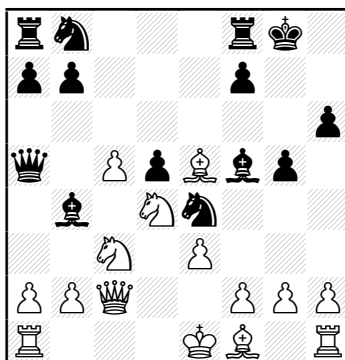
11...♖f5 12 ♖e5

12 ♛c1 [Shipov,S–Ward,C/Port Erin 1999](#).

12...0-0

12...♗xc3? is a mistake - [Karpov,A–Short,N/Prague 2002](#).

13 ♗d4



13...♗xc3!?

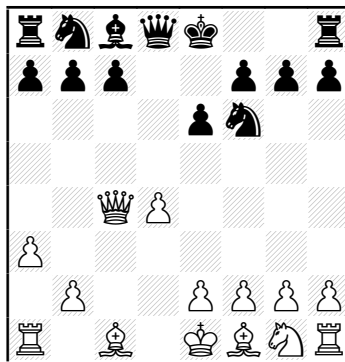
[Law,A–Ward,C/London 1994](#).

Nimzo-Indian: Classical – 4...d5 5 a3

[E36]

Last updated: 04/10/02 by John Emms

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♗c3 ♙b4 4 ♚c2 d5 5 a3 ♙xc3+ 6 ♚xc3 dxc4 7 ♚xc4



7...b6!?

A now very trendy successful dissuader of 5 a3. Black has conceded the bishop pair but gains a dangerous development advantage in exchange.

8 ♗f3

Black's idea is to sacrifice the c7-pawn after

8 ♙f4 ♙a6! 9 ♚xc7 ♚xc7 10 ♙xc7 ♗c6 and Black has good compensation for the pawn.

Short introduced this line against Baburin at the 1998 Isle of Man Open, the game ending in a draw. More recently Black was successful in the game Lalic-Plaskett, Redbus KO Playoff 1999, which continued 11 ♖c1 (11 ♗f3 ♖c8 12 ♙e5 ♗xe5 13 dxe5 ♗d7 14 b4 ♙b7 15 e3 ♙xf3 16 gxf3 ♗xe5 with an equal position) 11...♗xd4 12 ♙e5 ♗b3 13 ♖c3 ♗c5 14 ♙xf6 gxf6 15 e3 ♙xf1 16 ♗xf1 0-0 17 ♗e2 ♖ac8 18 ♗f3 ♗a4! 19 ♖cc1 ♗xb2 20 ♗d4 ♗c4 21 ♖c3 ♗d6 22 ♖hc1 ♖xc3 23 ♖xc3 ♖c8 24 ♖d3 e5 25 ♗e6 ♗c4 26 ♗d8 ♗f8 27 ♗b7 ♗e7 28 a4 ♖c7 29 ♖c3 ♖c6 30 ♖d3 ♗b2 31 ♖d8 ♗xa4 32 ♖a8 ♖c7 33 ♖xa7 ♗c3+ and White resigned on account of ...Nb5 winning a piece.

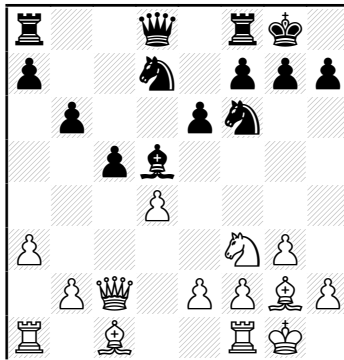
8...0-0

8...♙a6 9 ♚a4+ A very powerful novelty. White tempts the black queen to d7, where it will be misplaced, before retreating to c2. (The immediate 9 ♚c2 ♘bd7 10 ♙g5 0-0 11 e4 ♙xf1 12 ♚xf1 h6 13 ♙xf6 ♘xf6= led to equality in an exhibition 5 minute game between Kramnik and Kasparov, Moscow 1998) 9...♚d7 10 ♚c2 [Bareev,E-Short,N/Moscow 2002](#)

9 g3

9 ♙g5 ♙a6 [Likavsky,T-Cvitan,O/Charleville FRA 2000](#).

9...♙b7 10 ♙g2 ♙d5 11 ♚c2 ♘bd7 12 0-0 c5



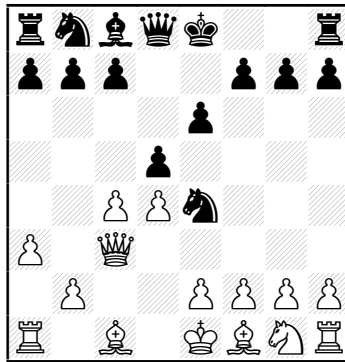
It seems to me that this is yet another case of Black equalising very comfortably with Short's 7...b6. If this is indeed the case, then I would think that White players would have to think again about 5 a3: [Ivanov,S-Beliavsky,A/Vrnjacka Banja YUG 1999](#).

Nimzo-Indian: Classical – 4...d5 5 a3

Bxc3+ 6 Qxc3 Ne4 [E37]

Last updated: 07/09/02 by John Emms

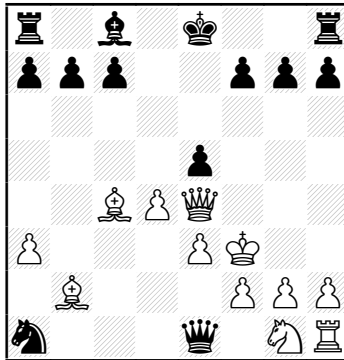
1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 Qc2 d5 5 a3 Bxc3+ 6 Qxc3 Ne4



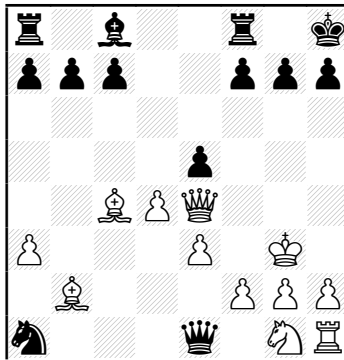
This is the main line after 5 a3.

7 Qc2 c5

7... Nc6 8 e3 e5 9 cxd5 This leads to massive complications. 9... Qxd5 10 Bc4 The next few moves are virtually forced. 10... Qa5+ 11 b4! 11... Nxb4 12 Qxe4 Nc2+ 13 Ke2 Qe1+ 14 Kf3 Nxa1 15 Bb2



Let's just take stock of the situation. Black is the exchange up, while White will find it difficult to develop his remaining knight without losing the rook on h1. On the other hand, White's queen and bishops are poised for attack and the Black knight on a1 is right out of play. Not many openings could reach such a crazy position after only 15 moves. 15...0-0 16 ♔g3 ♕h8



17 dxe5!! 'This move was the discovery of the Turkish GM Suat Atalik. The current state of theory is that White's attack is winning. 17...♙e6 18 ♖f3! The sacrifice seems to be much more potent when delayed by a move. 18...♜xh1 19 ♗g5 g6 20 ♗xf7+! When Black captures this knight, Black will temporarily be two whole rooks up. However, the attacking prowess of White's queen, bishops and passed e-pawn are too much for Black's strewn pieces to cope with. 20...♞xf7 21 ♙xe6 ♞g7 22 ♙f7! 22...♞d1 (22...♞xf7?: [Atalik,S–Sax,G/Szeged 1997](#)) 23 e6 [Jedynak,R–Thorfinnsson,B/ECC Panormo 2001](#).

8 dxc5 ♗c6 9 cxd5

9 ♗f3!? This move and 9 e3 are the only alternatives to the main line with 9 cxd5. 9...♜a5+ Black must play this disruptive move to justify his investment of a pawn. 10 ♗d2 10...♗d4 11 ♜d3 11...e5 12 b4 ♜a4 [Bareev,E–Ivanchuk,V/Novgorod 1994](#).

9 e3 This is the safest choice for White 9...♔a5+ 10 ♕d2 ♖xd2 11 ♗xd2 dxc4 12 ♗xa5 ♗xa5 13 ♝c1 b5 14 cxb6 ♕b7 see [Kaganskiy,G–Mikhalevski,A/Tel Aviv 2002](#)

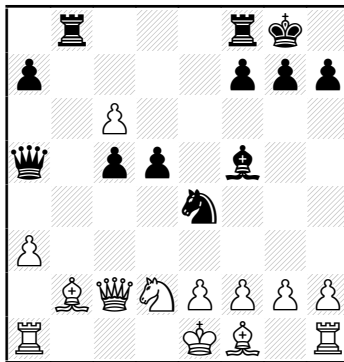
9...exd5 10 ♖f3 ♕f5 11 b4!

This leads to a very complicated line in which Black sacrifices a piece.

11...0-0 12 ♕b2

12 ♗b2!? An interesting move, which hasn't been played much before. White simply moves his queen from the same diagonal as the black bishop. 12...a5 [Ivanisevic,I–Mitkov,M/Skopje MKD 2002](#).

12...b6! 13 b5! bxc5! 14 bxc6 ♗a5+ 15 ♖d2 ♝ab8

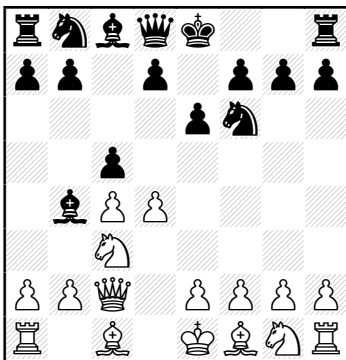


[Rogers,I–Ward,C/England 1997](#).

Nimzo-Indian: Classical – 4...c5 [E38]

Last updated: 24/12/03 by John Emms

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♙b4 4 ♚c2 c5



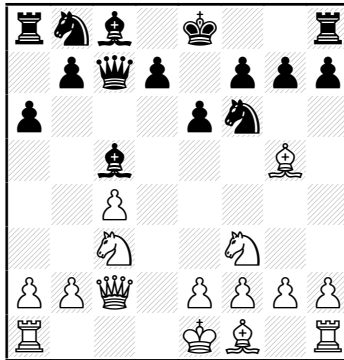
This is a tricky move which can lead to either wild tactical positions or quiet positions.

5 dxc5 ♘a6

This leads to very sharp play. Other quieter lines for Black include 4...0-0 and 4...Bxc5. 5...♙xc5 Not as popular as 5...Na6, with Black's aim simply being to reach a typical 'hedgehog' position. 6 ♘f3 (6 ♙f4: [Yrjola,J-Haapasalo,J/Jyvaskyla FIN 2001.](#))

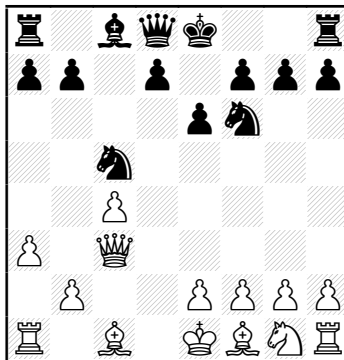
6...♚b6 Black knows that both his queen and bishop will have to move again soon, but sees this as a fair trade for keeping White's bishop within his own pawn structure: [Kiriakov,P-Tiviakov,S/Port Erin 1999.](#)

5...♚c7 This doesn't have much independent value. After White's logical 5 Nf3 Black virtually always follows up with ...Bxc5 in any case. 6 ♘f3 ♙xc5 7 ♙g5 a6



8 e4?! This pseudo-aggressive move is a mistake that gives Black's bishop on c5 a long open diagonal to the weak point at f2. Also the d4-square is weakened. See [Arlandi,E-Cvitan,O/Pula 2003](#). (Normal is 8 e3 after which White develops normally and Black adopts the so-called Hedgehog structure, for example: 8...♘e7 9 ♖d1 d6 10 ♙e2 0-0 11 0-0 b6 12 ♖d2 ♙b7 13 ♗fd1 ♖d8 14 ♙f4 h6 15 ♙g3 and White has a tiny edge, Lobron-Wahls, Bern 1990.)

6 a3 ♙xc3+ 7 ♚xc3 ♘xc5



8 b4

8 f3 The other main move, which prevents any ...Ne4 ideas for Black. However, there are still some active possibilities for Black! 8...d5 9 cxd5 b6!? Yet another sacrificial idea. It goes without saying that Black is happy after 10 dxe6 Bxe6. 10 b4 ♘a4 11 ♚b3 [Gabriel,C-Akopian,V/Elista Olympiad 1998](#).

8...♘ce4 9 ♚d4

9 ♚b2 is also possible: 9...d5 10 c5 h6 11 ♙c3 – see [Serper,G-Ippolito,D/Seattle 2003](#).

9 ♖c2 d5 10 c5?? ♜xf2! is winning for Black – see [Fodor,T–Lengyel,B/Budapest 2003](#)

9...d5 10 c5

The sharpest line. The main alternative for White is 10 cxd5.

10...b6!? 11 f3 bxc5 12 bxc5 ♖a5+ 13 ♖b4

13...Qxb4+ 14 axb4 gives White a very pleasant endgame, so the following piece sacrifice is virtually forced.

13...♖c7! 14 fxe4 ♜b8 15 ♖a4+ ♔d7 16 c6 0-0

16...♖e5!? is also very interesting:

17 exd5!?

For 17 ♔d2 see [Shirov,A–Lautier,J/Biel 1991](#) (ECO code E38)

17 cxd7 ♖c3+ 18 ♔d1 (18 ♔f2 ♜g4#) 18...♖xa1 is clearly better for Black, who has an automatic attack against the white king.

17...♖e5 18 ♜a2

[Van Wely,L–Palo,D/Halkidiki 2002](#).

Nimzo-Indian: Classical – 4...c5 5 dxc5

0-0 [E39]

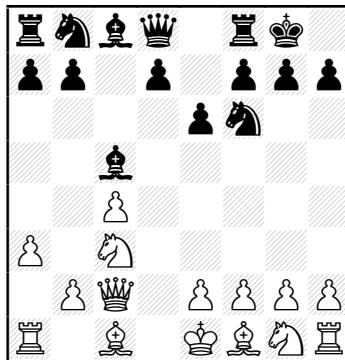
Last updated: 24/12/03 by John Emms

1 d4

1...♞f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♞c3 ♟b4 4 ♚c2 c5 5 dxc5 0-0 6 a3

6 ♞f3 6...♞a6 7 a3?! This is too accommodating. (A better version is reached after 7 ♟d2 7...♞xc5 8 a3 ♟xc3 9 ♟xc3 which was played recently in Kramnik–Grischuk, Cap D'Agde 2003. In this position Black has to be wary of Ng5 ideas, so perhaps the immediate 9...♞ce4 is most accurate.) 7...♟xc3+ 8 ♚xc3 ♞xc5 9 b4? I don't think White should be so ambitious here – his position isn't strong enough to support this early advance and Black is able to cash in by opening the position up to exploit his development advantage – see [Wagner,R–Fischer,J/Bad Wiessee 2003](#).

6...♟xc5



7 ♞f3

This position is commonly reached via the move order 4...0-0 5 Nf3 c5 6 dxc5. 7 ♟g5?? ♟xf2+! [Krush,I–Maciejka,B/Internet ICC 2000](#).

7...b6

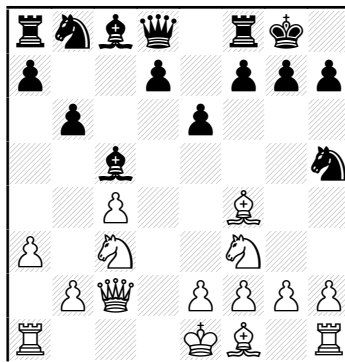
Sensibly fianchettoing the c8-bishop.

7...d5!? An unusual move, which rather goes against the grain of a Nimzo player and seems to put the d-pawn under early pressure. Most Nimzo players would stick to either 7...b6 or 7...Nc6 here. 8 ♖g5 [Hillarp Persson,T-Engman,R/Skelleftea 1999](#) (ECO code E39 in ChessPub).

Black other main move here is 7...♗c6, for example: 8 ♖g5 ♗d4!? 9 ♗xd4 ♕xd4 10 e3 ♜a5 11 exd4 ♜xg5 12 ♜d2 ♜xd2+ 13 ♙xd2 and the general consensus is that White holds a tiny edge in this endgame.

7...♞c7!? is an interesting wrinkle. The bishop normally winds up on this square as Black heads for a hedgehog structure, but it's unusual to see the bishop retreating so early. 8 ♖f4 This bishop usually ends up on either f4 or g5. 8...♗h5 – see [Wang Rui-Zhang Zhong/Yongchuan 2003](#).

8 ♖f4 ♗h5



Black can also simply develop: 8...♞b7 9 ♞d1 ♗c6 10 e4 ♗e7 11 h3 ♗g6 12 ♖h2 ♗h5 – see [Bareev,E-Ivanchuk,V/Rethymnon 2003](#).

9 ♖g5

9 ♖g3!? If Black now wants to exchange off this bishop, he opens a potential attacking avenue for White – the h-file 9...♞b7 see [Sokolov,I-Macieja,B/Reykjavik 2003](#).

9...♞e7 10 h4!?

This aggressive move is typical Kasparov but in fact it has been credited to the US GM Boris Gulko.

10 ♖xe7 ♜xe7 11 ♞d1 ♞d8 12 e3 ♖b7 13 ♖e2 ♗f6 14 0-0 ♗a6 15 ♗b5 d5 16 cxd5 ♗xd5 17 ♞c1 ♞dc8 18 ♜b1 ♗c5 19 ♞fd1 was agreed drawn in Dreev-A.Ivanov, New York 1990.

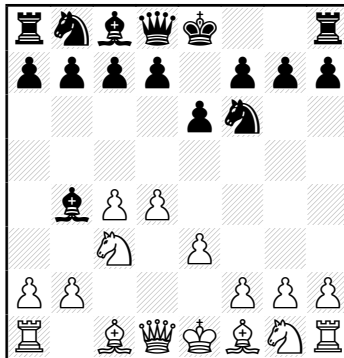
10...§b7 11 0-0-0

– see [Kasparov,G–Chuchelov,V/Rethymnon 2003](#).

Nimzo-Indian – Hübner Variation [E41]

Last updated: 14/01/02 by John Emms

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 4 e3



The Rubinstein Variation has historically been a most prominent choice for players with White, especially those who, unlike the 4 Qc2 adherents, like the comfort of developing in a speedy fashion. With 4 e3 White prepares to move his f1-bishop, probably to d3, and then his g1-knight. Here the choice is more difficult. Either the knight develops classically via f3, or else lends extra support to the c3-knight with Nge2. Black has more alternatives against the Rubinstein than against any other variation of the Nimzo. The most popular lines are the classical and flexible 4...0-0, striking immediately in the centre with 4...c5 and continuing to control the centre with pieces by the tricky 4...b6.

4...c5

Immediately hitting the centre.

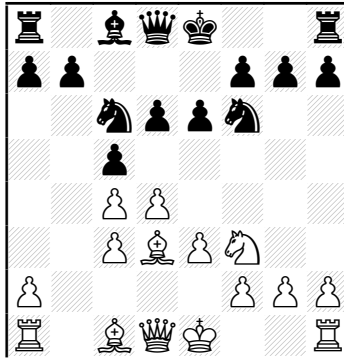
5 ♗d3

5 ♘ge2 is the other main move (see [E42]).

5...♘c6 6 ♘f3

Again White can avoid the doubled-pawn complex with

6...♗xc3+ 7 bxc3 d6



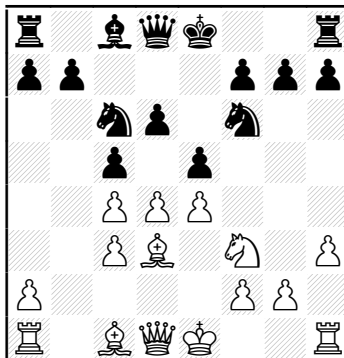
This way of playing for Black was developed by the German Grandmaster Robert Hübner. Black voluntarily gives up the bishop pair, but saddles White with doubled c-pawns. With 7...d6 Black signals his intentions to close the centre with ...e6–e5, after which White will find it difficult to make space for his bishops. This approach is very respectable and has many supporters.

8 e4

White can also delay this advance in the centre, for example 8 0-0 e5 9 ♘d2 It is a common theme in the Hübner variation for White to leave Black attacking d4 more times than it is defended. The logic is that White is happy to clear off more pawns (even at the cost of losing one) as it leaves the board freer for his bishops to operate. In contrast Black prefers a more blocked pawn structure where his knights can rule the day: [Babula, V–Van der Sterren, P/Delmenhorst GER 2000](#).

8...e5 9 h3

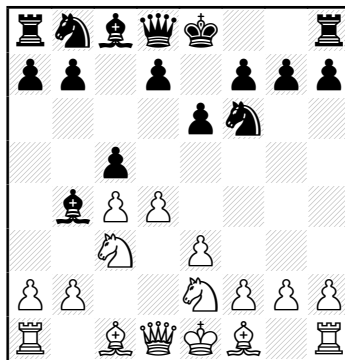
[Pein, M–Plaskett, J/Southend ENG 1999](#).



Nimzo-Indian – 4 e3 c5 5 Nge2 [E42]

Last updated: 03/03/02 by John Emms

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♙b4 4 e3 c5 5 ♘ge2



This is one of the main replies to 4...c5. With 5 Nge2 White prevents Black from inflicting the doubled pawn complex. White's idea is simply to play a2–a3 and recapture on c3 with the knight, giving White the advantage of having the bishop pair. The slight disadvantage of this move is that it blocks in the f1-bishop, so it takes longer than normal for White to develop his kingside pieces.

5...cxd4

The most popular response. With this exchange Black frees his b4–bishop, which can now retreat after a2–a3.

6 exd4 0-0

6...d5 Black immediately strikes in the centre. 7 a3 Asking the question to the bishop on b4, which must now either retreat or exchange on c3. (7 c5 is the main alternative) 7...♙xc3+ 8 ♘xc3 dxc4 9 ♙xc4 ♘c6 10 ♙e3 0-0 11 0-0 A typical isolated queen's pawn (IQP) position has arisen. White has the bishop pair and is probably a bit better, but Black remains extremely solid. 11...b6 12 ♔f3 [Divljan,I–Bluvshstein,M/Montreal CAN 2002](#).

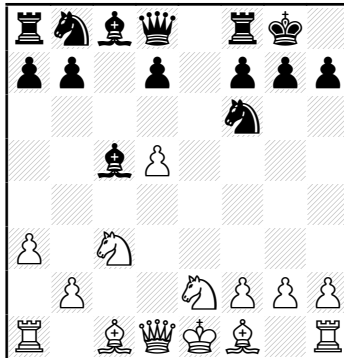
7 a3

7 c5! Scherbakov,R–Stohl,I/Koszalin POL 1999.

7...♗e7 8 d5

This move gains space in the centre and threatens to win the bishop with d5–d6.

8...exd5 9 cxd5 ♖c5



At the moment this move seems to be more popular than 9...Re8, which is also fully playable.

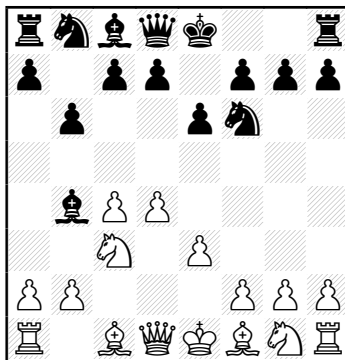
10 ♘d4

Lautier,J–Topalov,V/Elista 1998.

Nimzo-Indian – 4 e3 b6 [E43]

Last updated: 13/05/03 by John Emms

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♙b4 4 e3 b6



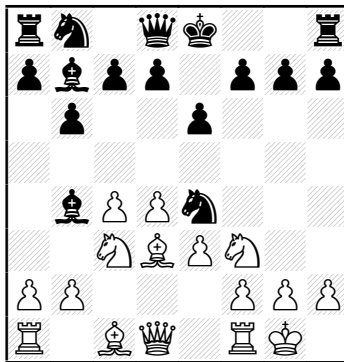
This is the move which most supports Nimzowitch's original concept, that is to control the centre with pieces rather than pawns. It's particularly popular at club level and its main advantages are that it's reasonably easy to play, can be lots of fun, and there are plenty of tricks which unaware White players can fall for!

5 ♙d3

This is the classical way of development, but many players now prefer the sneaky 5 Nge2 (see [E44]).

5 ♕f3 A cheeky attempt at a refuting the old ...b6 system. Preventing 5...Bb7, it certainly throws a spanner in the works although Black now handles the position very sensibly: [Othman,A–Yakovich,Y/Dubai UAE 2001](#).

5...♙b7 6 ♘f3 ♘e4!?! 7 0-0!?



This offers a pawn sacrifice, which Black does well to decline.
 7 ♖c2 f5 8 0-0 would transpose to the main text.

7...f5

The most consistent move. Black adds extra support to his knight and his pawn formation now resembles a Dutch Defence. Accepting the pawn sacrifice can be very hazardous, e.g.

7...♞xc3 8 bxc3 ♙xc3 9 ♖b1 ♞c6 10 ♖b3 ♙a5 11 e4 h6 12 d5 ♞e7 13 ♙b2± and White has lots of space and very active pieces, Balashov–Romanishin, Lvov zt 1978.

7...♙xc3 8 bxc3 ♞xc3 9 ♖c2 ♙xf3 10 gxf3 ♖g5+ 11 ♔h1 ♖h5 12 ♖g1! ♖xf3+ 13 ♖g2 f5 14 ♙a3 ♞e4 15 ♖f1 ♖g8 16 ♙e2 ♖h3 17 f3 ♞f6 18 d5 ♔f7 19 e4± and Black got mowed down in the centre with White's bishops and pawns, Keres–Spassky, Riga cxf 1965.

8 d5!?

This move represents White's most ambitious attempt in this line. White tries to smash open the centre, hoping that Black's weaknesses will be exposed in an open position. For his part, Black generally tries to keep the position as blocked as possible, expecting to cash in on White's pawn weaknesses later on in the game. Play in this line can be particularly sharp.

8 ♖c2 8...♙xc3 9 bxc3 0-0 10 ♞d2 White takes steps to dislodge the Black knight. 10...♖h4! [Rabinovich,I–Alekhine,A/USSR 1920](#).

8 ♞e2 This move certainly has some logic to it. Black was likely to play ...Bxc3 next move, but now his bishop is rather stuck out on a limb on b4. 8...0-0 9 a3 ♙d6 – see [Mchedlishvili–Sakaev,K/Dubai 2003](#).

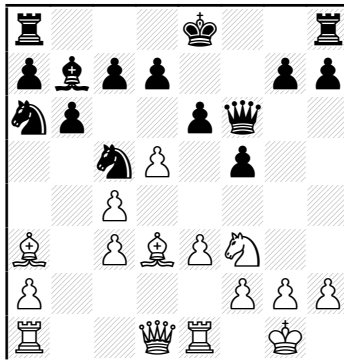
8...♙xc3

8...♞xc3 Taking up the challenge. 9 bxc3 ♙xc3 10 ♖b1 exd5 11 cxd5 ♙xd5 [Rausis,I–Wahls,M/Hamburg 2002](#).

9 bxc3 ♘c5!

The knight moves to an outpost, before it gets captured. After 9...♘a6 White can reach an advantage after 10 ♙xc4! fxe4 11 ♘d2 exd5 12 ♚h5+ g6 13 ♚e5+ ♔f7 14 cxd5

10 ♙a3 ♘ba6 11 ♖e1!? ♚f6

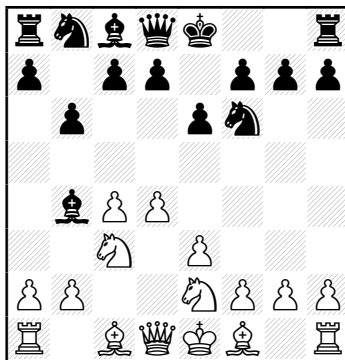


Sadler, M–Ward, C/Hastings 1997.

Nimzo-Indian – 4 e3 b6 5 Nge2 [E44]

Last updated: 07/04/03 by John Emms

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 4 e3 b6 5 ♘ge2



This move is perhaps the most testing response to 4...b6. White develops the king's knight and prepares to recapture on c3 with it. If Black plays passively, then he could simply wind up handing over the bishop pair for no tactical or structural compensation. Hence Black must strive to play as actively as possible after 5 Ne2.

5...♘e4

Adding more pressure to c3.

5...♗b7 6 a3 ♗e7 7 d5 0-0 8 ♘g3 b5 see [Galicek,S–Bernasek,J/Lahucovice 2003](#).

6 ♙c2 ♗b7 7 a3 ♗xc3+ 8 ♘xc3 ♘xc3 9 ♙xc3 0-0

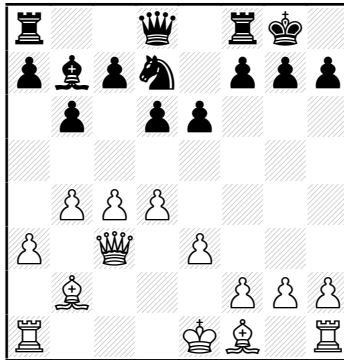
9...♙f6!? [Townsend,P–Ward,C/4NCL 2001](#).

10 b4!

The strongest move. White prepares to fianchetto the c1-bishop, so that the queen and bishop point towards g7. Other ideas include:

10 f3 ♙h4+! 11 g3 ♙h5 12 e4 f5 and Black can nibble at White's fragile looking centre.

10...d6 11 ♗b2 ♘d7



11...f5!? should be answered in a direct fashion with 12 d5 e5 13 c5! (13 ♕e2 Mancini,M–Flament,F/Le Touquet FRA 2001.) 13...bxc5 14 bxc5 when 14...♙xd5 15 ♖d1 gives White lots of open lines to attack.

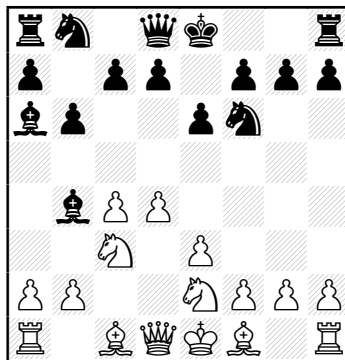
12 c5!

As far as I can tell, this move has only been played once, but it does seem to give Black lots of problems. White's pawns from a3 to e3 make a rather impressive arrow pointing at the black camp. Already c5–c6, forking bishop and knight, is a major threat: Conquest,S–Crawley,G/British Ch Blackpool 1988.

Nimzo-Indian – 4 e3 b6 5 Nge2 Ba6 [E45]

Last updated: 29/10/02 by John Emms

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♙b4 4 e3 b6 5 ♘ge2 ♙a6



The main alternative to 5...Ne4. Black homes in on a negative point of 5 Ne2, that is that the c4 pawn is temporarily left unguarded thus it seems logical to hit it with the bishop, Black will be quite happy in the long term in the event of a light-squared bishop trade.

6 ♘g3

6 a3 6...♙e7 7 ♘f4 d5 (7...0-0 [Collier,D–Couso,L/Halkidiki 2002.](#)) 8 cxd5 ♙xf1 9 ♖xf1 (9 dxe6 An amazing sacrifice which has only been played a few times and is not mentioned by the Encyclopaedia of Chess Openings (ECO). I must admit, however, that I'm not convinced by its correctness. 9...♙a6 10 exf7+ ♖xf7 11 ♚b3+ ♖e8 see [Ibragimov,I–Burnett,R/Philadelphia 2002](#)) 9...♘xd5 [Timman,J–Hübner,R/Montreal 1979/.](#)

For the main alternative 6 a3 see [Timman,J–Huebner,R/Montreal 1979](#) (ECO code E45).

6...♙xc3+

6...h5!? [Obodchuk,A–Onischuk,A/Poikovsky RUS 2002.](#)

7 bxc3 d5

8 ♖a3!? dxc4

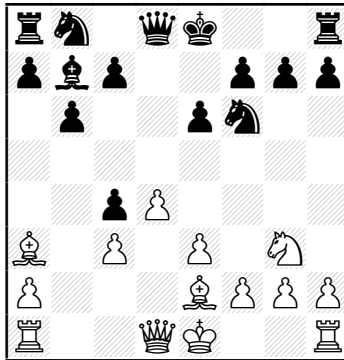
This move looks a little to greedy to me.

8...♗xc4

9 ♖e2

Counting on long term compensation and hence not opting for the obvious 9 e4!?

9...♗b7



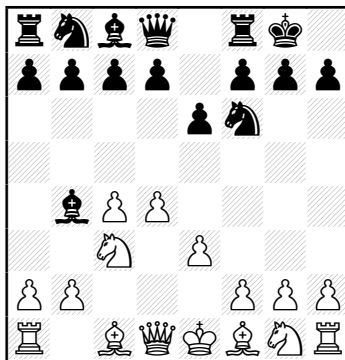
10 0-0

Gual Pascual,A–Arguelles Garcia,P/Barcelona ESP 2000.

Nimzo-Indian – 4 e3 0-0 5 Nge2 [E46]

Last updated: 14/01/02 by John Emms

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♙b4 4 e3 0-0



The most flexible move at Black's disposal.

5 ♘ge2

In general this move is regarded as not that dangerous against 4...0-0, as it is against both 4...c5 and 4...b6. Nevertheless, there are still Grandmasters who are willing to play this line for White, notably the ex-Soviet Mikhail Gurevich.

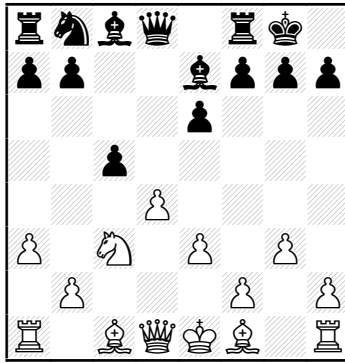
5...d5

5...♘c4 6 ♚c2 d5 [Salo,H–Leino,J/FIN 2000](#).

6 a3 ♙e7 7 cxd5 ♘xd5

The main alternative for Black is 7...cxd5 for example, 8 g3 c6 9 ♙g2 a5 10 0-0 ♘a6 11 f3 c5 12 g4 h6 13 ♙d2 ♚e8 14 ♙c1 ♘c7 with an equal position, Bronstein–Bareev, Rome 1990.

8 g3 ♘xc3 9 ♘xc3 c5

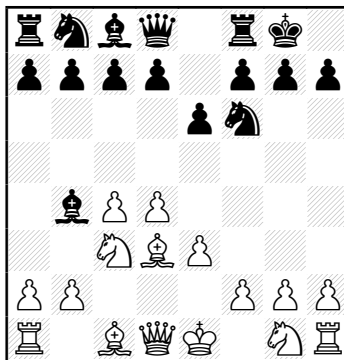


Shaked, T–Kramnik, V/Tilburg 1997.

Nimzo-Indian – 4 e3 0-0 5 Bd3 [E47]

Last updated: 04/10/02 by John Emms

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♙b4 4 e3 0-0 5 ♙d3



White develops in classical style.

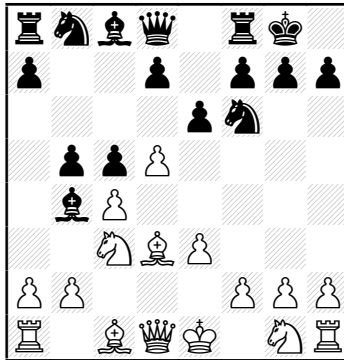
5...c5

5...d6!? A rare but interesting line. 6 ♘ge2 c5 The same situation can also be reached via alternative move-orders such as 4...c5 5 Bd3 0-0 6 Ne2 d6. 7 0-0 ♘c6 8 dxc5 Awarded '?!' because it's never been played before and it hardly proves successful. Previously White has tried 8 Ne4, 8 Bc2, 8 d5 and 8 a3. 8...♘e5!? [Babula, V-Kurajica, B/Istanbul Olympiad, Turkey 2000](#).

6 d5!?

An interesting idea which was used by Korchnoi in a world championship match against Karpov. Recently, the Swiss GM Vadim Milov has been using it too. White's usual replies to 5...c5 are 6 Nf3, 6 Nge2 and 6 a3, all of which have been covered on this site.

6...b5!?



Black offers a pawn in order to take over the centre. This was Karpov's choice against Korchnoi.

6...exd5 7 cxd5 also looks sensible. To my mind, Black has a kind of souped-up Snake Benoni – the bishop is already placed on the a5–e1 diagonal without having to go through the cumbersome ...Bd6–c7–a5. 7...♞xd5 8 ♟xh7+ ♚xh7 9 ♜xd5

7 ♟d2?

This gives Black everything he wants.

7 dxe6 is critical: 7...bxc4!?! (7...fxe6 8 cxb5 a6 9 ♞ge2 d5 10 0-0 e5 11 a3 was slightly better for White in Korchnoi–Karpov, World Championship (17th Game) Bagiuo City 1978) 8 exf7+ ♜h8 9 ♟xc4 d5 10 ♟e2 ♞e4! 11 ♟d2 ♞xd2 12 ♜xd2 d4 13 0-0-0 ♞c6 14 ♜c2 ♜a5 15 ♞b1 ♟e6 16 ♞f3 ♟xf7 and Black has good compensation for the sacrificed pawn, Venglovsky–Goncharenko, correspondence 1984, although it must be said that this variation is hardly forced.

If White wishes to decline the pawn on offer, then 7 ♞ge2 is a much better bet.

7...bxc4

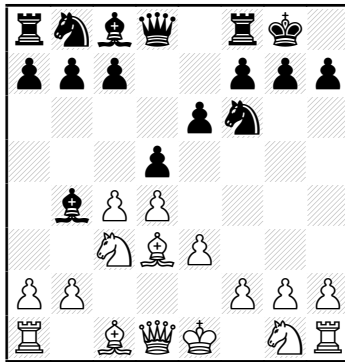
[Tunur,M–Gaprindashvili,V/Kocaeli 2002.](#)

Nimzo-Indian – 4 e3 0-0 5 Bd3 d5 6 Nge2

[E48]

Last updated: 05/12/02 by John Emms

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♙b4 4 e3 0-0 5 ♙d3 d5

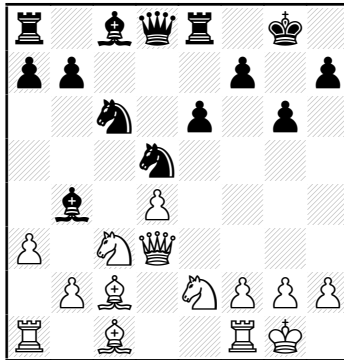


This and 5...c5, which often transposes, are Black's two main moves.

6 cxd5

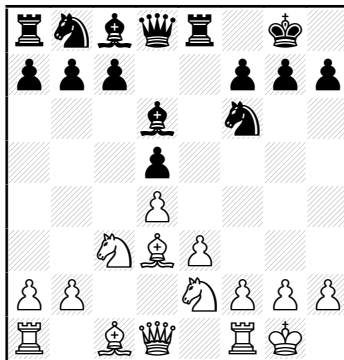
With this move White immediately clarifies the position in the centre. A positive feature is that White no longer needs to worry about ...dxc4 ideas for Black. On the negative side, Black's light-squared bishop will be freed.

6 ♘ge2 c5 7 cxd5 cxd4 8 exd4 ♘xd5 9 0-0 ♘c6 10 ♙c2 ♖e8 Preparing ...g6 and ...Bf8. 11 ♙d3 g6 12 a3



Chasing the bishop, although it does want to go back to f8 in any case. 12...♔f8
[Onischuk, A - Karpov, A/Biel 1996.](#)

6...exd5 7 ♖ge2 ♜e8 8 0-0 ♔d6



The bishop's job on b4 has been completed. Now that the pawns have been exchanged, the black bishop sits quite happily on d6 (there is no c4–c5 to worry about), where it points menacingly towards the white king.

9 a3

For 9 ♔d2 see [Georgiev, V - Kalinin, A/Wijk aan Zee 2000](#) (ECO code E48).

The main line is 9 f3 c5 10 ♖e1 ♖c6 11 ♖h4, for example: 11...♔e7 12 ♖f2 a6 13 g4 b5 14 ♖g3 b4 15 ♖ce2 a5 16 g5 ♖d7 17 f4 ♔a6 18 ♔xa6 ♜xa6 19 ♔d2 ♖b6 with chances for both sides, [Giorgadze - Almasi, Yerevan Olympiad 1996.](#)

9...♖g4!

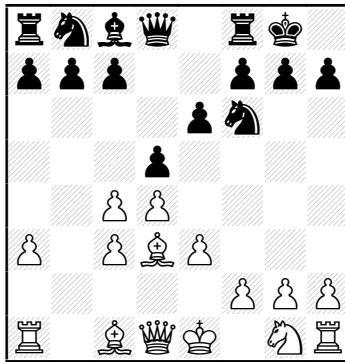
see [Van Wely, L - Acs, P/Hoogeveen 2002.](#)

Nimzo-Indian – 4 e3 0-0 5 Bd3 d5 6 a3

[E49]

Last updated: 08/04/02 by John Emms

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♙b4 4 e3 0-0 5 ♙d3 d5 6 a3 ♙xc3+ 7 bxc3



7...c5 8 cxd5 exd5 9 ♘e2

A good move. On this occasion the knight belongs on e2 rather than f3, as White wants to push forward in the centre with f2–f3 and e3–e4.

9 f3 b6 10 ♘e2 ♙a6 11 0-0 ♙xd3 12 ♗xd3 These sort of positions are known to be slightly favourable for White, who has an easy plan of expanding in the centre with e3–e4. 12...♘c6 13 e4! [Lazovic,G–Zelcic,R/Pula CRO 1999](#).

9...b6

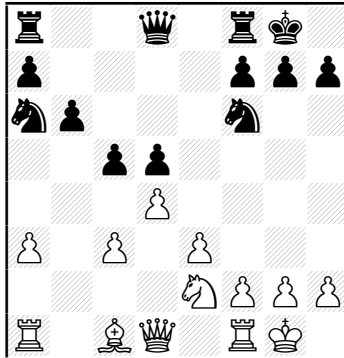
This is a typical way for Black to play. He wants to eliminate White's bishop pair advantage by coincidentally trading his bad for White's good bishop.

9...♘c6 10 0-0 ♗e8 (10...c4?! is a premature blocking of the position – see [Azmaiparashvili,Z–Feygin,M/ICC INT 2002](#)) 11 f3 [Kacheishvili,G–Jenni,F/Anibal Open ESP 2001](#).

10 0-0 ♙a6

Sensibly exchanging White's powerful bishop on d3.

11 ♖xa6 ♘xa6



12 ♕b2

Those lovers of old chess would be interested in Botvinnik's Immortal Game. You're probably asking yourself what this bishop is actually doing on b2, other than acting like a big pawn. Well, it true it looks rather redundant at the moment, but later on it does have a big say. Even so, perhaps 12 Qd3 was more accurate.

12 ♕d3 ♘c7 Vera,R–Garcia Martinez,S/Las Tunas CUB 2001.

12...♕d7 13 a4 ♖fe8 14 ♕d3

Botvinnik,M–Capablanca,J/It AVRO, Netherlands 1938.

Nimzo-Indian – 4 e3 0-0 5 Nf3 d5 6 Bd3

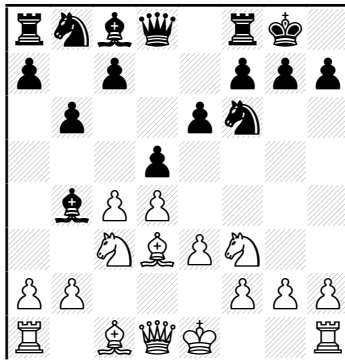
b6 [E52]

Last updated: 12/10/03 by John Emms

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♙b4 4 e3 0-0 5 ♘f3 d5 6 ♙d3

Or 5 Bd3 d5 6 Nf3.

6...b6



The most theoretical coverage by far comes with 6...c5 and the deviations (including the transpositional Isolated Queen's Pawn that frequently arise) that may follow. Nevertheless I personally cannot see anything much wrong with 6...b6 and the likes of 'NCO' hardly condemn it either. I guess at the end of the day it just depends on the type of positions one likes to play.

7 0-0

7 a3 ♙d6?! (7... ♙xc3+ 8 bxc3 ♙a6!) 8 e4 dxe4 9 ♘xe4 is better for White – see [Lugovoi-Balashov/Krasnoyarsk 2003](#).

7...♙b7

Looking for a trade of 'bad' for 'good' bishop with 7...Ba6 is also not stupid.

8 cxd5 exd5

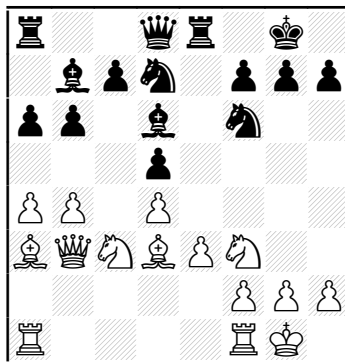
Obviously this appears to keep Black's bishop blocked behind the pawn, but recapturing in this manner has its pluses. In particular the control exerted over e4 provides ...Ne4 as a future option and in preventing e3–e4, Black keeps White's dark-squared bishop incarcerated too.

9 a3

In this old approach White sees Black's offside dark-squared bishop as a way to initiate a queenside expansion plan.

9 ♖e5 Beginning action on the kingside: [Sadler,M–Korchnoi,V/Tilburg NED 1998](#).

9...♙d6 10 b4 ♘bd7 11 ♚b3 a6 12 a4 ♜e8 13 ♙a3



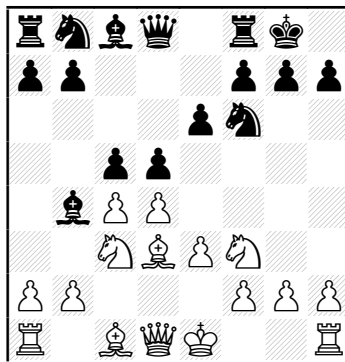
[Zilberman,Y–Huebner,R/Capablanca mem Elite, Havana CUB 1998](#).

Nimzo-Indian: 4 e3 0-0 – 5 Nf3 d5 6 Bd3

c5 7 a3 [E53]

Last updated: 29/01/02 by John Emms

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 4 e3 0-0 5 ♘f3 d5 6 ♗d3 c5



This leads to the main lines of the Rubinstein Nimzo.

7 a3

For 7 0-0 see [E54] – [E59].

7...♗xc3+ 8 bxc3 dxc4 9 ♗xc4 ♕a5

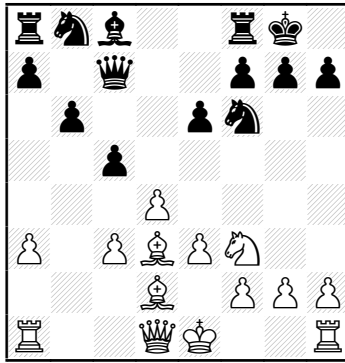
Theory suggests that forcing White's bishop to d2 is worthwhile as then Black will never see it materialising on a3 (after a typical a4–a5 push).

9...♕c7 10 ♗a2 b6 11 0-0 ♘bd7 12 ♗b2 ♗b7 13 c4 [Gulko,B–Shabalov,A/Seattle USA 2002](#)

10 ♗d2 ♕c7!?

10...♘e4 11 0-0 b6 is also playable, but here Black opts to retrieve his queen first.

11 ♗d3 b6



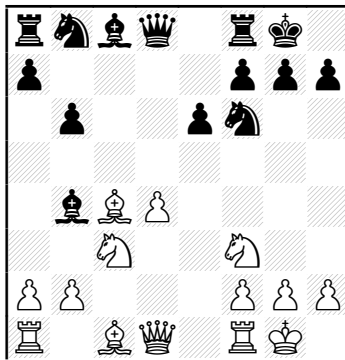
Gulko,B-Adams,M/Internet 2000.

Nimzo-Indian: Main Line – 7 0-0 dxc4 8

Bxc4 cxd4 [E54]

Last updated: 24/12/03 by John Emms

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♙b4 4 e3 0-0 5 ♘f3 d5 6 ♙d3 c5 7 0-0 dxc4 8 ♙xc4
cxd4 9 exd4 b6



Karpov has made this line his own, and has scored very well with it. He tends to play these typical Isolated Queen's Pawn (IQP) positions very well.

An interesting alternative is 9...a6!? 10 ♙g5 (10 a3 ♙xc3 11 bxc3 ♖c7 12 ♙d3 ♗xc3 Speelman,J–Bauer,C/Leon ESP 2001) 10...b5 11 ♙b3 (11 ♙d3 ♙b7 12 ♘e5 Norri,J–Pinheiro,J/Leon ESP 2001.) 11...♙b7 12 ♖e2 ♙xc3 (12...♘bd7 13 ♖ad1 ♙xc3 14 bxc3 ♗c7 see Nikolov,S–Zelcic,R/Bled 2002.) 13 bxc3 ♘bd7 Sadler,M–Emms,J/ch–GBR (Playoff), Hove ENG 1997.

9...♙xc3 It's unusual to exchange on c3 so early. Normally Black keeps his options open and prepares to fianchetto his c8–bishop with 9...b6 or 9...a6, planning ...b7–b5. 10 bxc3 ♗c7 11 ♖e2 ♘bd7 12 ♙a3 A consequence of Black's ninth move is that this bishop can use the c1–a3 diagonal (this is one reason why Black usually waits for Bg5 before exchanging on c3). (12 ♙b2 followed by Bc4–d3 and c3–c4, is another option for White.) 12...♖e8 – see Speelman,J–Richardson,J/Birmingham 2002.

9...♘bd7 Yet another option for Black on move nine. 10 ♙g5 ♙xc3 (10...b6 11 ♗b3 ♙xc3 12 ♗xc3 see FALCON–JONNY 2.51/Graz 2003) 11 bxc3 ♗a5 – see Dumitrache,D–Boudre,J/Montpellier 2003.

10 ♖g5

10 ♖e2 10...♗b7 11 ♖d1 ♗xc3! 11...Nbd7 is sensible too but Kasparov opts to mix things up here and now. (11...♗bd7 12 ♗d2 Taimanov,M–Karpov,A/USSR 1973.) 12 bxc3 ♖c7 Vladimirov,E–Kasparov,G/Batumi, Georgia 2001 (x2).

10...♗b7 11 ♖e1

11 ♗e5!? A tricky move. After 11 Ne5 the position can become critical early on. 11...♗xc3 11...Nbd7 and (11...♗e7 are also possible.) 12 bxc3 ♖c7 Emms,J–Lalic,B/British Championship 2001.

11 ♗b3!? This move looks a little slow. White normally reacts aggressively with one of 11 Qe2, 11 Re1, 11 Rc1 or 11 Ne5. 11...♗bd7 12 ♖c1 ♗xc3 13 bxc3 ♖c7 14 ♖e1 ♗e4 Iskusnyh,S–Zvjaginsev,V/Moscow RUS 2002.

11 ♖c1 ♗c6 12 ♗d3 ♗e7 13 ♗xf6 gxf6 14 ♗e4 see Harikrishna,P–Ramesh,R/Torquay 2002

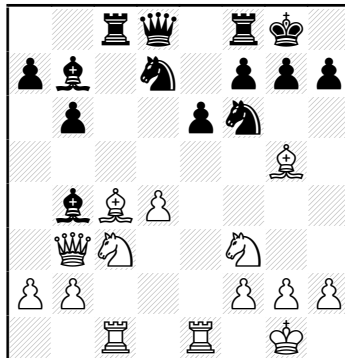
11...♗bd7

11...♗xc3 12 bxc3 ♗bd7 13 ♗d3 ♖c7 14 c4 Struk,J–Abdulla,A/Hamburg GER 2001.

12 ♖c1 ♖c8

For the immediate 12...♗xc3 see Narciso Dublan,M–Illescas Cordoba,M/Lanzarote 2003.

13 ♖b3



13 ♗d3

13...♗xc3

13...♗e7?! 14 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 15 ♗xe6! is good for White (see the game Kramnik,V–Kasparov,G/London 2000).

14 ♖xc3 ♔e8?!

Breaking the pin on the f6-knight is a good idea, but this move is played too early. Black should first play 14...h6 15 ♕h4 and only then 15...♔e8! Then 16 ♖d2 ♖d5 17 ♖cc1 ♗7f6 is equal according to the Ukrainian GM Michail Brodsky

15 ♖d2 h6? 16 ♕xh6!

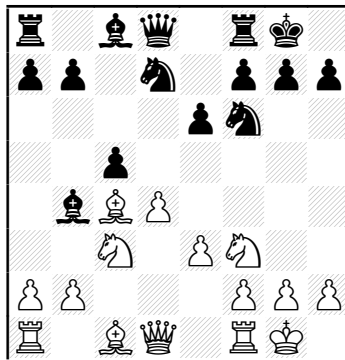
This sacrifice is very powerful – see [Onischuk,A–Vescovi,G/Poikovsky RUS 2002](#).

Nimzo-Indian: Main Line – 7...dxc4 8

Bxc4 Nbd7 [E55]

Last updated: 05/12/02 by John Emms

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♙b4 4 e3 0-0 5 ♘f3 d5 6 ♙d3 c5 7 0-0 dxc4 8 ♙xc4 ♘bd7



By delaying exchanging on d4 in favour of ...Nbd7, both sides have more options to reach a different kind of position from an IQP.

9 a3

9 Qe2, intending Rd1, is the main move for White, but 9 a3 has been quite popular recently. 9 ♙e2 b6 10 ♖d1 cxd4 11 exd4 ♙b7 12 ♘e5 ♙xc3 13 bxc3 ♜c8 14 ♙g5 ♛c7 15 ♘xd7 ♘xd7 16 ♙b5 with a small plus for White according to ECO.

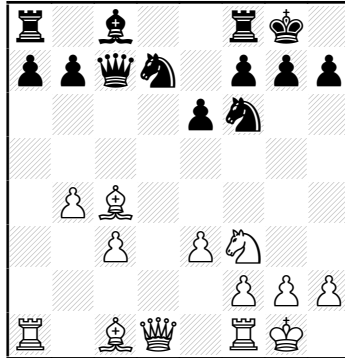
9...cxd4

9...♙a5!? This bishop retreat is becoming an Adams speciality. 10 ♛e2 see [Aleksandrov, A–Adams, M/Bled 2002](#).

10 axb4

Or 10 exd4 ♗xc3 11 bxc3 ♔c7! and Black can follow up with ...Nb6 or the traditional ...b7-b6.

10...dxc3 11 bxc3 ♔c7



12 ♔b3

12 ♔e2 ♖b6 13 ♗d3 e5!, followed by ...Be6, is fine for Black.

In Kramnik–Kasparov, London (12th match game) 2000, the World Champion–to–be tried an interesting pawn sacrifice with 12 ♗e2 ♔xc3 13 ♗a3 ♖d5 14 ♔b1 ♔f6 15 ♗d3 h6 16 b5 ♗d8 17 ♗b2 when White's powerful bishops provided enough compensation.

12...b6

[Kallio,H–Anastasian,A/Batumi 2002.](#)

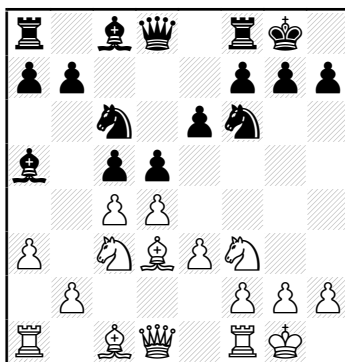
Nimzo-Indian: Main Line – 8 a3 [E56]

Last updated: 24/12/03 by John Emms

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♙b4 4 e3 0-0 5 ♘f3 d5 6 ♙d3 c5 7 0-0 ♘c6

The old main line of the Nimzo, although these days this move generally plays second fiddle to 7...dxc4.

8 a3 ♙a5!?



This is something different. The main move is 8...Bxc3.

9 cxd5 exd5 10 dxc5 ♙xc3 11 bxc3 ♙g4

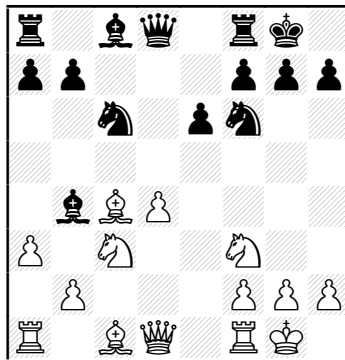
White has grabbed a pawn, but his remaining pawns on the queenside look a bit sickly. In compensation White possesses the long-term advantage of the bishop pair. See [Sadler-Pelletier/Bremer 2003](#).

Nimzo-Indian: Main Line – 8 a3 dxc4 9

Bxc4 cxd4 [E57]

Last updated: 12/10/03 by John Emms

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♙b4 4 e3 0-0 5 ♘f3 d5 6 ♙d3 c5 7 0-0 ♘c6 8 a3 dxc4
9 ♙xc4 cxd4 10 exd4

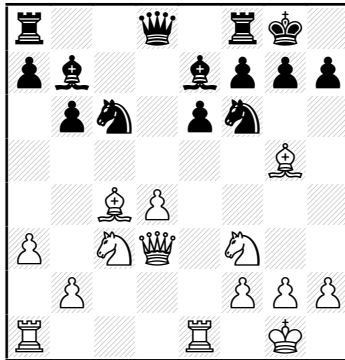


This version of the IQP seems to be less favourable for Black than the one arising after 7...dxc4 8 Bxc4 cxd4 9 exd4.

10...♙e7

This is the most popular move, but perhaps Black should consider 10...♙xc3 11 bxc3 b6 followed by ...Bb7 and perhaps ...Ne7–g6, reaching positions akin to the 'Karpov Variation'.

11 ♖e1 b6 12 ♙g5 ♙b7 13 ♚d3!



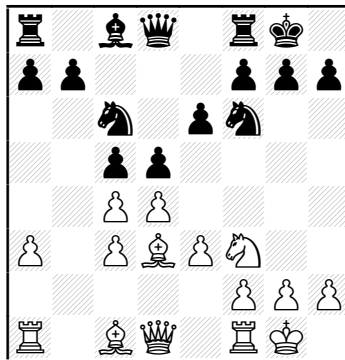
A good move, preparing ♖ad1 and a possible d4–d5. Also on the horizon is a possible ♘a2–b1. See [Legky,N–Berube,R/Villeurbanne 2003](#).

Nimzo-Indian: Main Line – 8 a3 Bc3 9

bxc3 dxc4 10 Bxc4 [E59]

Last updated: 12/08/03 by John Emms

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e3 0-0 5 Nf3 d5 6 Bd3 c5 7 0-0 Nc6 8 a3 Bxc3 9 bxc3



This is one of the oldest lines of the Nimzo-Indian. Although it's not so popular these days, it still has a good reputation.

9...dxc4 10 Bxc4

10...Qc7 11 Bd3

11 Bc2 Central pawn exchanges would have left this bishop vulnerable, but as ...e5 is a common Black plan it's also fair to say that 11 Ba2 is also a reasonable retreat.
11...e5 12 d5 Bd8 13 e4! [Rebel Tiger 12.0e-Shredder/Cadaques ESP 2000](#).

11 Qc2 b6 12 Bd3 [Poobesh Anand,S-Sandipan,C/Goa 2002](#).

11 Qe2 is a natural enough move, but this is actually a slight inaccuracy because certain tactics favour Black when the queen is on e2. 11...e5 12 d5 e4 – see [Melkumjanc,N-Deuber,R/Silvaplana 2003](#).

11...e5 12 Qc2 Re8

12...♙g4 13 ♜xe5 ♜xe5 14 dxe5 ♞xe5 15 f3 ♙d7 16 a4 ♜ad8 17 e4 ♙c6 18 ♙c4 ♞d7 19 ♞e1
Petrosian–Spassky, World Championship 1966.

13 e4

13 dxe5 ♜xe5 14 ♜xe5 ♞xe5 15 f3 ♙d7 16 a4 ♜ad8 17 e4 ♙c6 18 ♙c4 ♞d7 19 ♞e1
(Beliavsky–Kortchnoi, Wijk aan Zee 1984) and now Beliavsky recommends
19...♜d5! 20 ♙d2 ♜f4 21 ♜ad1 ♞ed8 with counterplay down the open d–file.

13...exd4 14 cxd4 ♙g4 15 e5

Now the complications begin.

15...♙xf3 16 exf6 ♜xd4 17 ♙xh7+ ♜h8 18 fxg7+ ♜xg7 19 ♙b2 ♜ad8

Material is even and the game is finely balance. Black's king lacks shelter, but otherwise he
is reasonably placed, with active minor pieces and his rooks in the centre. Of course
White can capture on f3 now, but Black is able to regain his piece immediately.

20 gxf3

20 ♞fc1 ♞h8 21 ♞xc5 (21 ♙xd4+? ♞xd4 22 ♞xc5?? ♞d1+!) 21...♞xc5 22 ♞xc5 ♜xh7 23 ♙xd4
(23 gxf3? ♞hg8+) 23...♞hg8! gave Black no problems in Langeweg–Kuijpers, Dutch
Ch 1980.

20...♞h8 21 ♜h1 ♜f8!

For 21...♞xh7 see [Sokolov,I–Kasparov,G/Wijk aan Zee NED 1999](#) (ECO code E59).

22 ♞d3? ♞d6!

[COMET B40-FRITZ/Paderborn GER 2002](#).